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A pararescue airman trains at Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan, last year.

Reto Smith  
Courtesy of the U.S. Air Force

## NATO MEETING

# Shanahan says no unilateral pullout from Afghanistan

By **LORNE COOK**  
AND **ROBERT BURNS**  
*Associated Press*

**BRUSSELS** — The U.S. will not reduce its troop presence in Afghanistan on its own, the top Pentagon official said Thursday in pledging that any moves will be fully coordinated with American allies.

"There will be no unilateral troop reductions," Acting Defense Secretary Pat Shanahan told reporters after his first meeting with NATO defense chiefs. "That was one of the messages: It will be coordinated. We're together."

Frustrated with America's longest war, President Donald Trump has said he wants out of Afghanistan, raising doubts about NATO's Afghan troop training operation in the strife-torn country. Around 14,000 U.S. troops are in Afghanistan, just over half with NATO and the rest conducting counterterrorism and combat operations.

Shanahan made clear that if U.S. troop cuts are made, either in connection with peace negotiations with the Taliban or in other circumstances, Washington will consult with NATO to ensure coordination.

**SEE PULLOUT ON PAGE 6**

## RELATED

Acting defense secretary calls on Europe to make public case for more defense spending  
**Page 6**

## Lawmaker says sexual misconduct has reached 'crisis' point at military academies

By **JEFF BARKER**  
*The Baltimore Sun*

WASHINGTON — Sexual misconduct at the nation's three military academies has accelerated at an alarming rate and become a "crisis," a U.S. House subcommittee chairwoman said Wednesday at a hearing that included testimony from the

Naval Academy's superintendent.

"I'm putting the academies on notice," said Rep. Jackie Speier, a California Democrat who chairs a House Armed Services subcommittee. "This isn't a blip, a 'Me-Too' bump or some accident. It's time for us to recognize that this is a crisis, and I intend to watch it like a hawk."

Vice Adm. Walter E. Carter Jr., the Naval

Academy superintendent, told the panel that "we must do better" and said the Annapolis, Md., academy has embarked on a corrective plan.

"We are not where I want us to be, nor where the Navy needs us to be," Carter said. "The Naval Academy must produce leaders that not only treat others with dignity and respect, but also demand the same

of those they lead."

A Defense Department survey released last month concluded that incidents of unwanted sexual contact jumped nearly 50 percent at the military service academies since a similar survey two years earlier.

The survey estimated 747 cadets and midshipmen experienced such contact or

**SEE CRISIS ON PAGE 5**

MILITARY

# Suspected spy served in USAF for 10 years

Ex-tech sergeant defected to Iran in 2013

By COREY DICKSTEIN  
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Monica E. Witt, the former Air Force technical sergeant and Defense Department intelligence contractor indicted on federal espionage charges unveiled Tuesday, spent more than a decade in the service before her eventual defection to Iran, according to the Air Force and the Justice Department.

Witt, 39, served in the Air Force from December 1997 until June 2008, according to records provided by the service. She initially served as an airborne cryptologic language analyst, which is a specialist responsible for translating intelligence communication often intercepted via airborne assets. Witt later reclassified as a special investigations officer.

She left the Air Force in 2008 as a special agent assigned to the 2nd Field Investigations Squadron at Joint Base Andrews in Maryland just outside Washington, according to military records.

In her first specialty, Witt served aboard an RC-135 Rivet

Joint air reconnaissance aircraft out of Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska, focusing on Persian-Farsi language communications, according to a resume on the website Indeed that was attributed to Witt and matched much of the information in her service records.

She moved into special investigations in 2003, focusing on criminal, fraud and counterintelligence investigations, according to the resume.

After leaving the Air Force, she worked as an intelligence analyst with major defense contractor Booz Allen Hamilton in 2008 supporting the Army as an Iranian subject matter expert. Witt later moved to Chenega Federal Systems, another Virginia-based contracting agency, as a Middle East desk officer providing guidance to the Air Force.

According to her resume, Witt received a master's degree in Middle East studies from George Washington University in Washington in 2012. She earned a bachelor's degree in social sciences in 2008 from the University



Part of the wanted poster for Monica Elfriede Witt.

of Maryland University College.

She claimed to have "extensive experience living and working" in locations that included Iraq, Qatar, Jordan, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Tajikistan and Iran.

The Justice Department said Tuesday that Witt, who remains at large, held high-level security clearances before she defected to Iran in 2013. The department charged she traveled in 2012 to Iran to attend a conference run by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, a faction of the Iranian military known to support terrorism and sanctioned by the United States.

About one year later, she reentered Iran, where she was provided housing and computer

equipment. In exchange, she disclosed classified information, including detailed information about U.S. intelligence officials, using information to draft "target packages" against those intelligence community individuals, the indictment charges.

It is not clear what led Witt to defect. In Iran, she has appeared to work at times to publish anti-American articles for the state-owned Press TV. In one publication, she chastised the U.S. military as a "boys' club" in which female servicemembers suffer from pervasive sexual harassment.

"The majority of men simply do not take the idea of harassment seriously," she wrote. "They make comments about a woman's

appearance, or make generalized sexual remarks openly at work. Often times, they do not view these comments as inappropriate."

The FBI on Tuesday included Witt among its "Most Wanted" individuals. The bureau wrote that Witt is believed to be in Iran and might be known there as Fatemah Zahra or Narges Witt.

The FBI seeks her arrest on the charges of conspiracy to deliver national defense information to representatives of a foreign government and delivering national defense information to representatives of a foreign government, specifically, the government of Iran.

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## MILITARY

# Housing horrors

Military families living with residential nightmares make a plea for reforms

By CLAUDIA GRISALES  
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Termites falling from light fixtures. Toxic mold sickening families. Rodent infestations of residences. Asbestos and lead paint exposures.

This is the alarming world of dilapidated military housing today.

On Wednesday, some families who have suffered with these residential nightmares told their stories on Capitol Hill.

"Our military families do not deserve this after all the sacrifices they make," Janna Driver, the wife of an active-duty Air Force servicemember and mother of five children, told lawmakers during an extensive Senate hearing on military housing problems. "It is criminal. It is unbelievable the extent of this cover-up."

Driver joined two other military spouses during the more than three-hour hearing to plead for help as they detailed years of battles with deteriorating housing conditions, subsequent illnesses and extensive bills.

Private military housing executives and top military officials also testified before the joint subpanel hearing for the Senate Armed Services Committee. They said they are now addressing the concerns.

"We let down some of our residents," said John Picerne, founder and chief executive officer of East Greenwich, R.I.-based Corvis Group, which manages military properties. "I'm sorry and we are going to fix it."

Military officials followed suit, saying they are overseeing new military housing improvements that are now underway.

"We must and will do better," said Robert McMahon, assistant defense secretary for sustainment.

Several witnesses and lawmakers agreed Wednesday that the residential horror stories can be traced back to the 1996 military housing privatization initiative that let contractors take over management of the residences.

Previously, the military managed the properties.

"We have a real problem here," said Rhode Island Sen. Jack Reed, the ranking Democrat for the Armed Services Committee. "Here we are 20 years later, there is a clear disconnect between what has been promised by the companies ... and the reality of what has been provided to military families."

Reed noted the committee has received "scores of heartbreaking testimonials with equally disturbing photos" of rampant mold, poor water quality, faulty construction, pest and rodent infestations and contamination of lead-based paint, carbon monoxide and radon.

A survey released this week found 55 percent of private military housing residents were dissatisfied with where they are living, noted Sen. Jim Inhofe, R-Okla., chairman of the Armed Services Committee.

The Military Family Advisory Network, which advocates for servicemembers and their families, received nearly 17,000 responses to their survey on military housing in a week. Forty-five percent said they had a neutral or favorable housing experience.

"We're going to get to the bottom of this," Inhofe said.

The senator said the committee will work with the Government Accountability Office as well as the Defense Department Inspector General as they conduct their own investigations of military housing.

Some military branches have also reassessed their housing properties. For example, the Army last year mandated town hall on lead risks in homes.

The efforts were launched after a December series by Reuters detailing the disrepair found at military housing properties across the United States. Subjects of the series, such as Driver, also recounted battles with the private companies that manage military housing now.

"They are covering up, painting over mold, threatening military



PHOTOS BY CARLOS BONGIOIANNE/Stars and Stripes

Navy spouse JoAnne Martz, left, listens to testimony Wednesday during a Senate Armed Services subcommittee hearing as witnesses told lawmakers about substandard conditions they've endured in military housing.

members with their command, using scare tactics and intimidation, lying to us and making the problems worse." Driver told Senators of her housing company, Balfour Beatty Communities. "And now, it is out of control."

Driver's family went from no debt to owing \$40,000 after a three-month battle over homes plagued with toxic mold and other concerns.

## 'A different story'

Driver and her family battled a series of illnesses before they discovered in August an extensive mold contamination in a utility room.

"On the surface, these homes appear to be flawless but inside the walls tell a different story," she said.

When Balfour Beatty Communities, based in Malvern, Pa., moved the family into a new home, they found a new case of mold, filthy floors, stained furniture and bug infestations.

Driver said she now suffers from chronic breathing issues and blurred vision. Her family takes supplements and prescriptions daily, with no end in sight.

"We will likely suffer from the effects of this for the rest of our lives, physically, financially, emotionally and mentally," she said.

Crystal Cornwall said stories such as Driver's are all too familiar. A Marine spouse, Cornwall launched a nonprofit called Safe Military Housing Initiative after running into her own residential nightmares and hearing of others.

Cornwall said in two years of researching the issue, she's seen peeling lead paint at a residence at Fort Belvoir in Fairfax County, Va.; a collapsing, moldy ceiling at a Camp Lejeune home in Jacksonville, N.C.; residential mice infestation at Camp Pendleton in Southern California; and water leaks at private homes at Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi, Miss.

"I received hundreds of reports from military families of mold growth, rodent and pest infesta-

tions, moisture intrusion, lead and asbestos exposures, radon concerns, base contamination, and cancer clusters in their housing," Cornwall, a mother of three, said Wednesday in her tearful testimony.

She and her family were based at Keesler Air Force Base when termites fell out of their light fixtures onto their beds. Later, when they were based at Camp Pendleton, they battled mold issues and unexpected move-out charges.

Cornwall said military families fighting for safe housing have too often been met with intimidation, personal attacks and attempts to discredit and silence them.

She implored lawmakers to consider amending or canceling the government's contracts with these private companies, let families have new legal options to fight back and allow them the ability to withhold housing allowances until residences are safe and habitable.

"We ask that you act on our testimony and ensure military families receive safe, habitable and functional housing and a better, more accountable way to resolve problems that arise," Cornwall said.

Jana Wanner, an Army spouse based at Fort Meade, Md., said she ran into her troubles when her family worked with Corvias Group to select special housing that suited their daughter, who has a genetic illness.

Though the family joined a wait list five months ahead of a 600-mile move to Fort Meade, they learned their selected residence was gone five days before the move.

They moved into a townhouse on base as a last-minute replacement, though the stairs posed a problem for their daughter. They faced unexpected fees and rent increases as well.

Then, they discovered mold at the home and their daughter began to experience nosebleeds.

"We still live in these conditions," Wanner said. "Our story is not unique, nor is it the worst."

## 'Committed to listening'

To address the growing concerns, Chris Williams, president of Balfour Beatty Communities, said his company has since revamped its mold and moisture inspection policies and increased preventative services and resources for residents.

Balfour runs military housing operations at 55 installations with more than 43,000 residences and 150,000 residents.

"We're committed to listening to our residents," Williams said.

Picerne said Corvias Group is making organizational changes, boosting staff in several communities, revamping their mold and mildew policies and increasing reports to military officials. Picerne said the company, which manages more than 27,000 homes including those at Fort Meade, is also renovating properties and working to eliminate concerns such as lead-based paint.

Hunt Military Communities owns interests in about 52,000 homes near 49 military installations. The company plans to invest \$500 million in rebuilding homes, and through that work expects to see improvements in its properties.

Executives for Landlease Corp., which manages 40,000 homes at 20 installations, and Dallas-based Lincoln Military Housing, which manages 37,000 residences, also planned new efforts to address fixes to their properties.

Jarl Bliss, president of Lincoln Military Housing, told lawmakers Wednesday that he will work with military families, partners and lawmakers to address any concerns with their operations and foster better communication and understanding.

"I regret when even one servicemember family feels we have come up short," he said. "I deeply regret any of our families feel this way."

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Military spouse Crystal Cornwall testifies during the Senate Armed Services subcommittee hearing Wednesday.



## MILITARY

# Navy submarine joins competition south of Japan

By CHRISTIAN LOPEZ  
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The U.S. Navy has sent a Los Angeles-class attack submarine to waters south of Japan to take part in the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force Submarine Competition that began Wednesday.

Aside from the U.S. submarine, the weeklong competition this year will feature five JMSDF ships, to include the Hyuga-class helicopter destroyer JS Ise, four JMSDF aircraft wings, several JMSDF submarines and an aircraft squadron, according to a Navy statement released Tuesday.

The competition stands as a test for all crews across numerous platforms to gauge proficiency in anti-submarine warfare.

The Navy did not identify the U.S. submarine taking part in the competition.

While the primary purpose of the exercise is to assess the ability of Japanese crews in a multitude of anti-submarine warfare scenarios, including a U.S. submarine provides the opportunity for "valuable bilateral cooperation" between the two allied forces, Capt. John Stafford,

Submarine Group 7 deputy chief of staff for operations, said in the statement.

"This is the kind of anti-submarine exercise our crews train for at home and practice at sea," he said. "We're pleased that our boat will have the opportunity to put their training to good use and we look forward to the opportunity to showcase our skills while working with our Japanese counterparts in a forward-deployed environment."

While the exercise is underway, a U.S. Navy sonar technician with the U.S. Pacific Fleet Navy Data Center will operate alongside the crew of a JMSDF submarine, according to the statement.

"We are very pleased to have a U.S. Navy submarine play a role in this year's submarine competition," said JMSDF Capt. Toshiaki Hoshina, deputy chief of staff for operations, Commander, Fleet Submarine Force. "Their participation will significantly improve our interoperability and strengthen the partnership among our forces."

The crew with the top performance throughout the exercise will be presented with the Japanese Battle Efficiency Award.

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## Navy petty officer guilty of manslaughter in crash

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — A Navy petty officer whose car plunged off a soaring bridge in San Diego and killed four people below was convicted Wednesday of vehicular manslaughter while intoxicated.

A jury also found Richard Sepolio, 27, guilty of driving under the influence causing injury, but acquitted him of the more serious charges of gross vehicular manslaughter while intoxicated. He also was acquitted of reckless driving and driving over the legal alcohol limit causing injury.

Sepolio could be sentenced to up to 18 years in prison.

This was a great outcome on this case," prosecutor Cally Bright said out of court. But Bright added, "Nothing will bring back the family members lost that day."

Prosecutors said Sepolio had been drinking on Oct. 15, 2016, and was arguing with his girlfriend — now his wife — by cellphone when he tried to speed past another car on the San Diego-Coronado Bridge. He lost control of his pickup truck, which crashed through

concrete and plunged 60 feet off the span into a crowd celebrating a motorcycle rally and festival at Chicano Park. The truck crushed vendor booths where people were standing.

Four people died, and seven were hurt.

Sepolio's pickup was recorded doing 81 mph going onto the bridge, which stretches across San Diego Bay and links San Diego to the Navy town of Coronado, where Sepolio was an aviation electronics technician.

At trial, Sepolio testified that he'd had two drinks earlier in the day but wasn't drunk and wasn't on the cellphone call at the time of the crash.

The defense and prosecution disagreed on whether several blood and breath tests given to Sepolio indicated he was impaired.

Defense attorney Paul Pfingst said outside court that he was disappointed that Sepolio was convicted of DUI even though jurors didn't find that he was driving with a blood-alcohol level above the legal limit, KFMB-TV reported.



Theron Godbold/Stars and Stripes

Senior Master Sgt. Lowell Armstrong unfolds a World War II-era Japanese flag during a return ceremony in Takasaki, Japan, on Thursday.

## S. Korea-based US airman returns Japanese flag taken as war trophy

By THERON GODBOLD  
AND HANA KUSUMOTO  
Stars and Stripes

TAKASAKI, Japan — A South Korea-based U.S. airman brought a World War II-era Japanese flag to a small city in Gunma prefecture Thursday to complete a family mission started after his grandfather died nearly two decades before.

Senior Master Sgt. Lowell Armstrong, 44, presented the signature-covered flag to the family of Masashi Ito, who was killed in the bloody Battle of Iwo Jima on March 17, 1945.

Such flags were often signed by servicemembers' families, neighbors, schoolmates and co-workers wishing for good fortune in war. The warriors would then fold the flag and carry it into battle.

Armstrong put on white gloves, unfolded the relic and presented it to Ito's nephews, Michio Miki, 90, and Hideo Ito, 76, during a formal ceremony attended by local officials at Gunma Gokoku Shrine, which honors war dead.

Ito's flag is covered with more than 30 signatures and messages wishing him good luck and congratulating him for joining the Japanese Imperial Navy.

"I'm truly grateful that my grandfather kept this flag in great condition all these years and my family decided to return it to its rightful owners as we know how much it means to your family," said Armstrong, who works in traffic management at Kunsan Air Base. "My grandfather would be happy that this flag is being returned."

Armstrong's grandfather, Lowell Armstrong, had not talked about his experience during the war or about the Japanese flag. After his death in 2002, his son,

**'From my understanding, the Japanese believe the spirit of the soldier lives on in the flag.'**

Senior Master Sgt. Lowell Armstrong

Steve, took possession of the flag and began researching how to return it. He eventually reached out to the Obon Society for help in 2016.

The Oregon-based group, which assists Americans with returning Japanese flags taken as war trophies, helped identify Ito as the original owner last fall.

"Out of respect to his family, it is only right to return it," Armstrong told Stars and Stripes days before Thursday's ceremony. "From my understanding, the Japanese believe the spirit of the soldier lives on in the flag."

Ito's nephews said they were shocked to find that their uncle's flag had survived after more than seven decades.

"It was a great surprise to have it returned like this out of millions of those that died (during the war)," Miki said. "I am thankful for the thoughtfulness of Mr. Armstrong's grandson to return it like this."

While such repatriations are common, Tuesday's ceremony marked the first time an active-duty soldier returned one of the flags, according to Keiko Zaik, co-founder of the Obon Society.

"I am honored to represent my family in this return ceremony," Armstrong said. "I was named after my grandfather ... he was one of the kindest, hard-working men anyone would ever meet. He would do anything for anyone."

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## WAR/MILITARY

# USAF approves medal for airmen at Papa Air Base

By JENNIFER H. SVAN  
Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — The Air Force for the first time has approved an award for airmen serving with the heavy airlift wing at Papa Air Base in Hungary.

The Heavy Airlift Wing Service Medal will be based on exceptional performance or service and is retroactive to the fall of 2008 when the first team arrived ahead of the start of flying operations the following summer, said Capt. Christopher Bowyer-Meeder, a spokesman for U.S. Air Forces in Europe-Air Forces Africa.

USAFE-AFAPRICA announced the award earlier this month.

The medal will allow commanders for the first time to acknowledge airmen for their contributions to the world's first and only multinational C-17 Globemaster II wing.

"We wanted to be able to recognize the hard work and dedication U.S. airmen serving at Papa 'have shown to the mission and to our partner nations that we work with here,' Col. James Sparrow, the vice commander of the Heavy Airlift Wing, said in a statement.

"It is a huge win for the program for the U.S. Air Force to approve this decoration."

But there's a small catch: As a foreign award, the medal must be presented in Hungary and it may be worn only while there, officials said. It will not count toward promotion.

Sparrow is also vice commander of the Strategic Airlift Capability Program, a partnership that supports the airlift operations of 12 NATO and partner nations from Papa, a former communist airfield located in the countryside about 100 miles west of Budapest.

The participating countries pooled their resources to buy and share C-17 cargo planes over a 30-year period, providing them more options for transporting large numbers of troops and supplies to far-flung places, including Afghanistan.

U.S. airmen assigned to the wing work alongside airmen



This performance medal was approved for airmen serving with a multinational wing in Hungary.

from NATO members Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania and Slovenia and from non-NATO partners Finland and Sweden.

Airmen volunteer for the assignment, typically serving either two years accompanied or 18 months unaccompanied.

The medal was first approved for use by all 12 nations in 2013. But to date, only Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Norway, Poland and Romania had awarded it to its airmen, officials said.

For U.S. airmen, medal recognition originally required the Defense Department, with concurrence from the State Department, to sign off on it, officials said.

The medal was also formerly considered a service award, meaning airmen need only be assigned and serve honorably at the wing for a specific timeframe, Bowyer-Meeder said.

The medal is now a personal performance award, Bowyer-Meeder said.

USAFE personnel experts spent about a year updating the criteria and changing it to a foreign award, a classification that allows commanders at Papa to issue the medals, officials said.

Airmen who believe they distinguished themselves during a previous assignment at Papa can submit service records through the wing for consideration, Bowyer-Meeder said.

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BRIAN FERGUSON/Stars and Stripes

The Strategic Airlift Capability Hangar Complex is the home to the Heavy Airlift Wing at Papa Air Base, Hungary.

## Crisis: Survey finds increase in sexual misconduct at 3 US military academies

FROM FRONT PAGE

harassment during the 2017-18 academic year, compared with 507 two years earlier. Women were usually the victims.

Rates increased for men and women at the United States Military Academy and for women at the U.S. Air Force Academy, but stayed the same for men and women at the Naval Academy, where some say such incidents are rarely reported.

But witnesses at the hearing of the House Military Personnel Subcommittee said issues persist at all three academies.

At the Naval Academy, for example, 32 percent of women don't believe senior leadership is making a serious effort to alleviate the problem, said retired Air Force Col. Don Christensen, citing survey results. Christensen is president of Protect our Defenders, a national organization working to end sexual assaults in the military.

Based on the survey results, the Defense Department estimated 254 midshipmen experienced some sort of unwanted sexual contact during the year.

But the Naval Academy received just 32 sexual assault reports in the last academic year — an increase of three reports from the previous year.

"Victims report at their own peril. That is the message being sent," Speier said. "The number

**'The number of women attending these academies is only going to grow, and that's why it's essential we fix these numbers.'**

Rep. Jackie Speier  
D-Calif.

of women attending these academies is only going to grow, and that's why it's essential we fix these numbers."

Carter said he presented the survey's findings to the "entire brigade" and characterized the response as "one of shock."

Carter said the Naval Academy strategy includes pre-admission screening of potential midshipmen, a sexual assault prevention program, initiatives to promote responsible alcohol choices and an emphasis on holding perpetrators accountable.

He said many examples of unwanted sexual contact involved alcohol. "I'm not blaming alcohol," he said, but suggested it was a factor.

The survey is conducted every other year. It used the term "unwanted sexual conduct" to refer to a range of prohibited offenses under the Uniform Code of Military Justice — from unwanted touching to forced penetration or oral sex.

The DOD says it is trying to reverse the troubling trend.

"The results this year do not reflect the large investment of attention, time and resources dedicated to these problems, including the recent implementation of the (Defense) Secretary's June 2017 requirement for the (service academies) to develop plans to address sexual harassment and sexual assault," the report said.

Elizabeth Van Winkle, a DOD official who is a psychologist, told the subcommittee that it was "devastating to be sitting here again to deliver this most unwelcome report."

"I sit before you today frustrated but resolved," said Van Winkle, executive director of the Office of Force Resiliency for the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.

The department has hired prevention specialists and enhanced reporting procedures, she added.

"If there was a single solution to eliminate sexual assault we would have done it already," Van Winkle said.

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## WAR/MILITARY

# Shanahan pushes allies to hike defense spending

By JOHN VANDIVER  
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — Acting Defense Secretary Pat Shanahan said leaders in Europe must galvanize public support for more military spending, saying that recent increases in investment aren't enough for the threats NATO now faces.

"The public is not aware of the evolving threat," Shanahan said Thursday after two days of talks at NATO headquarters in Brussels.

In his first meeting with allies as defense chief, Shanahan lauded members for recent spending increases and heaped praise on NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg for leading the push.

Allies agreed to stay the course in Afghanistan and said there would be no abrupt withdrawal while U.S.-led peace talks with the Taliban are continuing, Shanahan said.

But at a meeting Wednesday evening, described by Shanahan as a "family dinner," leaders wrestled with how to win public and political backing for building up their respective militaries, he said.

Since 2016, European allies and Canada have added \$40 billion in defense spending, a number expected to grow to \$100 billion by 2020. German spending makes up about \$30 billion of the \$100 billion increase, Shanahan said. However, Berlin still is not on track to meet NATO's defense spending benchmarks, and that is a problem, he said.

"It has to be more," Shanahan

## Pullout: NATO wary of timeline

### FROM FRONT PAGE

"What we talked about was, how do we double down on support for Afghan national defense and security forces to put even more pressure on the Taliban," Shanahan said.

Were U.S. troops to leave the NATO operation, allies like Germany wouldn't be able to do their job as they rely on American air support.

"No decision has been taken about any withdrawal. But we strongly support the efforts to reach a political, peaceful settlement," NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said before the talks.

The U.S. and NATO troops are mostly advising and training, but when requested they assist Afghan forces in battles with the Taliban, who carry out near-daily assaults on Afghan soldiers and police. More than 17 years after they were ousted by a U.S.-led coalition, the Taliban control, influence or hold sway over nearly half the country, and the conflict is at a stalemate.

U.S. envoy Zalmay Khalilzad is meeting with the Taliban and others to try to end the

conflict. He has briefed NATO ambassadors three times in recent weeks, including just before Thursday's meeting.

NATO is wary of setting any timeline for a possible withdrawal as the Taliban have been content to wait international forces out in the past.

"NATO allies went in together in Afghanistan. We will make decisions on our future posture in Afghanistan together, based on conditions determined together with the Afghans," Stoltenberg said.

Still, the Western allies understand that an offer to leave could be a powerful bargaining chip with the insurgents, even if the U.S.-led forces would want guarantees, or be able to monitor future peace moves. What is clear is that the 29-country military alliance has no shared appetite to shift from training and mentoring to counterterrorism operations.

For the moment though it is too early to tell. Upcoming elections in Afghanistan will further complicate the picture for NATO, as those polls decide what parties should be involved in peace moves.

In addition to the threat Russia poses in Eastern Europe, allies also must prepare to counter a more assertive China, contend

said. "The threat warrants more, and that is where there is divergence and that is where public messaging is so important."

# US denies Taliban claim of negotiations in Pakistan

By PAMELA CONSTABLE  
The Washington Post

ISLAMABAD — A surprise announcement by Afghan Taliban leaders that they are sending a delegation here next week to meet with American negotiators and Pakistani officials has met with a cautious U.S. denial on Thursday and silence from Pakistan.

If such a visit does take place on Monday, it would upstage the formal resumption of ongoing U.S.-Taliban meetings on Feb. 25 in Qatar and represent the first time the Afghan insurgents have openly met with Pakistani leaders since their five-year regime in Kabul was overthrown in 2001.

Whether the announcement was merely a trial balloon in the increasingly complex and expanding Afghan peace process or the result of private agreements that will eventually be acknowledged, it appeared to bolster Pakistan's

recent claims under Prime Minister Imran Khan that it wants to play a constructive role in ending the 17-year Afghan conflict.

The Afghan Taliban spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, said in a statement posted online late Wednesday that the group's plan to visit to Pakistan stemmed from a "formal invitation" from the Islamabad government, and that its delegates would meet with the Pakistani premier.

"This announcement is surprising but very important," said Amir Rana, a Pakistani conflict analyst. "It shows the Taliban have an increasing level of confidence as an important stakeholder, and that Islamabad can have a key positive role in the peaceful settlement of the Afghan problem." Rana warned, though, that "sustained efforts" and American "reciprocity" are also crucial.

A spokesman for the U.S. Embassy here said that the Taliban announcement had been "noted"

but that "we have not received a formal invitation to any talks ... we are not going to negotiate in public."

It also said the U.S. government "supports all steps" that would lead to inclusive peace talks and encourages "all countries" to support the process.

As of Thursday afternoon, there have been no public comments or statements about the possible Taliban visit from Pakistan's Foreign Ministry or other senior government offices.

Analysts said one specific motive for the Taliban's visit could be its hope to win the release of Anas Haqqani, a militant detained in Afghanistan since 2014 whom the group named this week to its newly announced peace negotiating committee.

The Taliban have already negotiated the release of an even more important figure, Abdul Ghani Baradar, as part of the peace process. Baradar, a co-founder

of the Taliban movement, was reportedly attempting to begin peace negotiations in 2010 when he was arrested and imprisoned in Pakistan. He was freed in October, reportedly under U.S. pressure. Taliban leaders have named Baradar, a moderate figure who is revered by their forces, to head their political office in Qatar.

The proposed meetings, while boosting Pakistan's credibility in the peace process, would also likely represent another setback for the Afghan government's wish to participate. The insurgents have refused to meet with President Ashraf Ghani or other officials, calling them American puppets, while meeting with opposition Afghan leaders in Moscow and holding a series of talks with U.S. officials in Qatar.

The contradictory signals about the possible Pakistan meeting led to conflicting reports Thursday about its genesis. One was that the United States was behind it,

hoping that Pakistan would pressure the insurgents to accept talks with the Ghani government. Some media reports here, though, cited Taliban officials saying that the visit marked a "success" for them because it signified Pakistan's official acknowledgment that they were the "true representatives" of their country.

Ghani's testy relationship with Islamabad was on display this week when the Afghan president tweeted his condemnation of Pakistani security forces repressing nonviolent protests.

Pakistan's foreign minister, Shah Mehmood Qureshi, denounced Ghani's criticism as "irresponsible" and "gross interference" in Pakistan's affairs. However, the two men are scheduled to meet and share a panel discussion on Afghan peace at an international security conference in Munich on Friday and Saturday.



Courtesy of NATO

Acting Defense Secretary Pat Shanahan, right, speaks with his United Kingdom counterpart, Gavin Williamson, at the NATO meeting Thursday in Brussels.

with instability in the Middle East and prepare for an array of cyberthreats, he said.

In Europe, opinions vary on the severity of the threat posed by Russia. Moscow's 2014 military intervention in Ukraine raised alarms inside NATO and brought about its largest reinforcement since the end of the Cold War. In the Baltics and Poland, regions with a history of being dominated by Russia, there is political consensus on military expenditures. Those countries are either meeting NATO's spending guideline or on a path to get there.

But in Germany, opinion is divided and Berlin says it will not meet a 2024 NATO deadline that calls for boosting defense spending to 2 percent of GDP. To change that, leaders must better communicate the threats allies

face to ensure defense spending is prioritized, Shanahan said.

"With what I know now (about those threats), I would spend more," Shanahan said.

For President Donald Trump, shortfalls in military spending by European allies has been the top concern regarding NATO. Any resistance to meeting spending targets would likely re-emerge as a flashpoint when Trump meets again with heads of state at the alliance's December summit in London.

At NATO's last summit in July, Trump warned the U.S. could "go its own way" if allies fail to meet spending obligations.

"What I heard from President Trump is we collectively need to do more," Shanahan said.

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## WAR ON TERRORISM

# Syrian forces clear militants from 2 villages

By ZEINA KARAM  
Associated Press

BEIRUT — U.S.-backed Syrian forces are clearing two villages in eastern Syria of remaining Islamic State militants who are hiding among the local population, and detaining others attempting to flee with the civilians, the U.S.-led coalition said Thursday.

The clearance operations are taking place in the villages of Shalalah and Baghouz, near the border with Iraq, a coalition statement said, hours after scores of militants from ISIS — including many foreign fighters — surrendered to U.S.-backed fighters known as the Syrian Democratic Forces on Wednesday night.

The developments brought the Kurdish-led force closer to taking full control of the last remaining area controlled by the extremists, a Kurdish official and activists said.

Ciyager Amed, an official with the Syrian Democratic Forces, confirmed that a number of ISIS fighters who had been holed up in the village of Baghouz gave themselves up, without giving numbers. He said most of those remaining were Iraqis and foreigners and that few civilians remained in the tiny sliver of land still in ISIS hands, although women and children are continuing to trickle out of the enclave.

The capture of Baghouz and nearby areas would mark the end of a devastating four-year global campaign to end the extremist group's hold on territory in Syria and Iraq, their so-called "caliphate" which at the height of the militant group's power in 2014 controlled nearly a third of both Iraq and Syria.

President Donald Trump has said the group is all but defeated, and announced in December that he would withdraw all American forces from Syria.

A coalition official, however, said the group continues to pose a threat to the security of the region even if their hold on territory is ending.

"While ISIS is on the verge of collapse, and the end of the physi-

cal caliphate is at hand, it does not signal the end of this campaign," said U.K. Maj. Gen. Christopher Ghika. "We will pursue them until that threat is eliminated."

The coalition statement said SDF forces are detaining ISIS militants who are attempting to escape among the civilians fleeing the fighting in Baghouz. Those "arriving to be screened are the wives of ISIS fighters, some of whom sustained gunshot wounds while fleeing from ISIS," Ghika said.

Mustafa Bali, an SDF spokesman, said hundreds of women and children came out Wednesday. He said the fighters who remained appeared to be among the ISIS elite who have lots of experience and are fighting "fiercely."

"They also don't have other options. Either to surrender or die," Bali said.

Amid the exodus of people from the last pocket of territory held by ISIS, scores of foreign women married to ISIS militants have come out, including French, Canadian and other nationals. They are being held in SDF-run camps in eastern Syria, which have been overwhelmed with newcomers and lacking enough food, water and medical care.

Meanwhile, the leaders of Russia, Turkey and Iran are meeting in the Black Sea resort of Sochi on Thursday for talks hosted by Vladimir Putin about the latest developments in northern Syria.

Russia, a key backer of Syrian President Bashar Assad, is getting increasingly impatient about militants in Syria's Idlib province.

Russia and Turkey, which supports the Syrian opposition, had brokered a cease-fire for Idlib, the last remaining rebel stronghold, that averted a major government offensive but that deal has been strained as al-Qaida-linked militants seized towns and villages in Idlib.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Russia is going to raise its concerns at the talks about the presence of "terrorists" there.

## In heart of Baghdad, war museum honors fallen militiamen in ISIS fight

By ZEINA KARAM  
AND QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA  
Associated Press

BAGHDAD — A few steps from Baghdad's cultural heart and its famous book market on al-Mutanabi Street lies the Iraqi capital's latest tourist attraction: a war museum glorifying the sacrifices of thousands of mainly Shiite militiamen who died fighting Islamic State.

The museum is meant to honor the fallen but it also underscores the Iran-backed militias' growing clout in the country. Their political and military might soared after they helped the government defeat ISIS — so much so that they are now accused by some of seeking to build a parallel state within Iraq.

Housed inside Baghdad's historic, Ottoman-era al-Qishla building, the museum displays rocket launchers, drones and cannons from the four-year fight with ISIS. Visitors can browse through the war booty and other memorabilia from the front lines, as well as personal belongings fighters left behind on battlefields across the country.

They feel the spirits of the martyrs floating around this space," said teacher Umm Hassan al-Oukeily, 55, on a visit to the museum this week. I feel that Iraq exists because of them. ... They are the pulse of Iraq."

The mainly Shiite militias — known collectively as the Popular Mobilization Forces, or "Hashed al-Shaabi" in Arabic — emerged following a call in June 2014 by Iraq's top Shiite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, for volunteers to fight against ISIS.

At the time, ISIS militants had overrun the northern city of Mosul, Iraq's second-largest, and much of northern and western Iraq, coming dangerously close to Baghdad and Shiite shrines farther south as Iraq's military and security forces collapsed in the face of the onslaught.

Tens of thousands heeded the cleric's call, enlisting in multiple militia factions, many of which had existed for years and even fought American forces in Iraq. Sanctioned by the Iraqi government, the militias played a key role in the war against ISIS.

That made the Iran-backed militiamen an indirect ally to the American forces, who returned to Iraq in 2014 at the invitation of the government to help battle ISIS. A U.S.-led coalition provided crucial air support as Iraqi forces regrouped and drove ISIS out in a costly campaign.



KHALID MOHAMMED/AP

Statues and other commemorative works depicting the fight with Islamic State are displayed in the Popular Mobilization Forces War Museum in Baghdad.

The militias lost about 7,000 fighters in the war. They included some Christian, Yazidi and Sunni militias but were dominated by Shiite groups with close ties to Iran. They came out of the war with the image of an almost holy force protecting Iraq's Shiite Muslim majority.

That kind of popular aura has helped enshrine the militias as a major political and paramilitary player in post-ISIS Iraq. Militia factions are present in almost every Iraq province, in many cases deeply embedded in local governance and rivaling state institutions. Posters of dead fighters adorn shop windows in Baghdad and elsewhere.

"There are no words to describe my feelings right now," said al-Oukeily, the teacher, tears in her eyes as she made her way around the museum with her daughter.

In 2018 parliamentary elections — the first after the victory over ISIS — the militias' coalition won 48 seats, making it the second-largest bloc in Parliament and guaranteeing the militias a say in formal politics. Under the new budget, militiamen are for the first time being paid the same salaries as soldiers.

The mix of arms and political power is a dangerous dynamic for Iraq, a country with a history of bloody sectarian strife. Iraq's Sunni minority and also some in the military and the government fear the Shiite militias will dominate Iraq the way the powerful Revolutionary Guard does in Iran or the militant Hezbollah group in Lebanon.

The Shiite militias "are building economic empires, taking control of state reconstruction companies and projects and developing into

economic organizations," said a Western diplomat in Baghdad who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss Iraqi politics.

The more than 50 militias in Iraq have up to 140,000 fighters, according to some estimates and the Popular Mobilization Forces itself. They are backed by tanks and weapons and have their own intelligence agency, operations rooms and court of law.

In an interview with The Associated Press last month, the leader of one of the most powerful of the militias, Qais al-Khazali, said their existence complements that of the Iraqi military and suggested that disbanding them was not in the cards as long as there's an ongoing military threat to Iraq.

At the museum, images of the fallen militiamen hang from the ceiling, printed on light bulbs. Boots, watches and eyeglasses are displayed next to flowers that honor the martyrs.

Visitors walk around life-size replicas of militia outposts, complete with real sniper rifles, sandbags and camouflage nets.

They pose for photos next to two mannequins, one depicting a bearded militiaman in ISIS' black uniform, a knife protruding from his abdomen, lying on the ground. The other, a militiaman towering over the body, has his boot pressed against the militiaman's head.

Museum manager Ali Al Shawky, who was a volunteer doctor with the militias during the war against ISIS, said the idea behind the museum was to preserve the memory of the fallen and "personify their heroic deeds."

"We wanted to say something to the martyrs with this museum," Al Shawky said. "We will never forget you."

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## WAR/MILITARY

## Congress reasserts war-making powers

By LISA MASCARO  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Asserting congressional authority over war-making powers, the House passed a resolution Wednesday that would force the administration to withdraw U.S. troops from involvement in Yemen, a rebuke of President Donald Trump's alliance with the Saudi-led coalition behind the military intervention.

Lawmakers in both parties are increasingly uneasy over the humanitarian crisis in Yemen and skeptical of the U.S. partnership with that coalition, especially in light of Saudi Arabia's role in the killing of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi, a critic of the royal family.

Passage would mark the first time Congress has relied on the decade-old War Powers Resolution to halt military intervention. It also would set up a potential confrontation with the White House, which has threatened a veto. The House voted 248-177 to approve the measure, sending it to the Senate, where a similar resolution passed last year.

"We have helped create, and worsen, the world's largest humanitarian crisis," Rep. Barbara Lee, D-Calif., said during the debate. "Our involvement in this war, quite frankly, is shameful."

The chairman of the House Foreign Relations Committee, Rep. Eliot Engel, D-N.Y., said the vote represents "Congress reclaiming its role in foreign policy."

Senate approval would set up a showdown with the administration — a veto would be Trump's first — over the president's shifting approach on foreign policy.

Lawmakers are quick to point out that Trump wants to withdraw troops from the wars in Syria and Afghanistan as part of his "America First" approach, but he has shown less interest in limiting the U.S. role in Yemen.

The White House says the House resolution is "flawed" because U.S. troops are not directly involved in military action in Yemen, where the coalition is fighting the Iran-backed Houthi rebels in a conflict largely seen as a proxy war involving the Mideast's dominant regional players.

Since 2015, the administration says, the U.S. has provided support to the coalition, including intelligence and, until recently, aerial refueling, but it has not had forces involved in "hostilities."

Congress has not invoked the War Power Resolution, which requires approval of military actions, since it was enacted in 1973. Lawmakers approved more sweeping authorizations for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that some argue are being used

too broadly for other military actions.

Newly emboldened Democrats in the House, eager to confront Trump on foreign policy, and Republicans in both chambers have shown a willingness to put a legislative check on the president's agenda.

In the House, 18 Republicans, including members of the GOP's libertarian-leaning wing and Trump allies in the conservative Freedom Caucus, joined Democrats in passing the Yemen measure.

Rep. Ro Khanna, D-Calif., who drafted the legislation, said there's an emerging bipartisan alliance that's skeptical of military intervention without congressional oversight.

"It's not just about Yemen. It's about the Congress taking a stand and every future president having to think twice about whether to authorize a military intervention without congressional approval," Khanna said in an interview.

The Senate version is from independent Sen. Bernie Sanders, of Vermont, and backed by Utah Republican Sen. Mike Lee.

Before Wednesday's vote, the House overwhelmingly agreed to add an amendment offered by Republicans who are seeking to expose emerging Democratic divisions over support for Israel.

The amendment reaffirms the U.S. commitment "to combat anti-Semitism around

the world" and says it's in the national security interest to oppose boycotts of Israel. That's a reference to the Boycott, Divest and Sanction movement that has gained support of some lawmakers.

First-term Rep. Ilhan Omar, D-Minn., one of the Muslim-American women elected to Congress, came under criticism this week for her comments against the Israel lobbying organization AIPAC that raised anti-Semitic stereotypes. She later apologized.

Now the Yemen measure goes to the Senate, where a similar resolution on removing U.S. involvement in the war was approved with Republican support late last year.

At the time, Congress was eager to send a message to both the president and the Saudis after the October murder of the U.S.-based journalist Khashoggi at the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul. The U.S. has sanctioned 17 Saudi individuals for their involvement in the killing, and U.S. intelligence officials have concluded that the Saudi crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, must have at least known of the plot. Trump so far has decided not to impose harsher penalties on the prince. The kingdom insists he did not order the killing.

The outcome of the legislation is uncertain. Republicans control the Senate, 53-47, and a simple majority is needed to pass.

## Afghan translator killed by wrong-way driver in Calif.

By CHAD GARLAND  
Stars and Stripes

A father of seven killed in a head-on crash in San Francisco last week had worked as a translator for U.S. troops and counternarcotics teams in Afghanistan, former supervisors said this week.

Waheed Etimad, 40, immigrated to the U.S. four years ago with his family on a special immigrant visa to "make a good life for his children," said Fadel Rabi, Qais in Afghanistan, who said he was his former supervisor.

They settled in Concord, Calif., on the east side of the Bay Area, a region popular with Afghan immigrants. Etimad began taking college courses, seeking to become a computer engineer, and worked full-time at night as an Uber driver.

It was while driving for Uber in the early morning hours of Feb. 3 that he was killed when a sedan driving south in the northbound lanes of Highway 101 crashed into two other cars and then plowed into Etimad's minivan, which was carrying six passengers. One of those passengers was taken to a hospital with serious injuries. Eight others were also injured in the incident.

The sedan driver, identified by officials as Kayla Wilson, 21, of San Jose, was also killed in the crash. The California Highway Patrol said last week it was investigating whether Wilson was under the influence of drugs or alcohol. The Associated Press reported. Local media reported that CHP believed she may have also crashed into a building before entering the highway.

Days after the deadly crash, family and friends gathered at a local cemetery to mourn and pray for Etimad.

"I'm going to miss my dad for a long time," his 13-year-old son Yahya told San Francisco's ABC 7 News at the funeral, calling his father his hero. "We all miss him so much."

Etimad's work in Afghanistan included translating on contracts for the U.S. Army



WAHEED ETIMAD/Facebook

**Waheed Etimad is seen with two of his seven children in a photo posted to his Facebook page in June. He died last week in a head-on crash in San Francisco.**

and the Drug Enforcement Administration at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, said Ahmad Nowshirvani, another former supervisor, who now lives in Virginia. That work helped Afghan police arrest many drug traffickers and seize tons of drugs, he said.

"He was my smartest linguist," Nowshirvani said. "Our direct U.S. supervisor ... was always bringing examples of his work and dedication."

On one operation, while working with U.S. troops in eastern Afghanistan, Etimad was shot by the Taliban and had to be

medically evacuated to Bagram Air Field for treatment, Nowshirvani said. Etimad's son also spoke of his father getting shot, though it's unclear when the shooting happened.

Neither the U.S.-led mission nor the embassy in Kabul could confirm Etimad's work. FedSys Inc., who he claimed on Facebook was his former employer and who both Nowshirvani and Qais said they worked for, declined to comment and said it could not "confirm and/or deny" his employment without his signed consent.

But the Taliban knew that he worked for

the Americans, Yahya Etimad told KPX 5 in San Francisco. "There was a lot of Taliban," he said.

After settling in the Bay Area, Etimad had struggled to adjust to life in the U.S. and to provide for his family, Nowshirvani said.

"He had a really hard time," he said. "This was the saddest part of his tragedy."

Since the crash, there's been an outpouring of support for the family, both online and in the local Muslim community. The children, ranging in age from 2 to 16, have no relatives living in the U.S. other than their mother, Qais said. As is typical for Afghan families, she didn't work outside the home, he said. She also doesn't speak English and doesn't know how to drive, Yahya Etimad told KRON 4 News.

Friends were seeking a way to get a visa for a family member to travel from Afghanistan to come help the family, Qais said. A local Muslim leader called on lawmakers for help in a televised report.

Meanwhile, a friend set up a GoFundMe campaign to pay for funeral expenses and more. It quickly exceeded its initial \$99,000 goal and has now surpassed \$300,000 in pledges.

The Muslim Community Center-East Bay in Pleasanton, Calif., has also helped, sending the family home from a memorial service last week with enough donated toys, gift cards, shoes and clothing to fill the trunks of two cars, a Facebook post said.

The center plans to continue collecting donations through Saturday and has offered to pay the family's \$2,000 monthly rent for one year, as well as providing a replacement minivan.

"The MCC is coordinating critical legal and financial counseling assistance for the family ... to make sure the family is protected and that they are able to leverage the trending crowdfunding to the long-term benefit of the household," the post said.

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## NATION

# Long leaves FEMA after 2 years of fighting all manner of fires

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Less than two years into a tenure marked by five major hurricanes, multiple lethal wildfires and a tense relationship with his boss, Federal Emergency Management Agency Administrator William "Brook" Long resigned Wednesday "to go home to my family," as he put it in an official statement released by the agency. Peter Gaynor, who has served as Long's deputy, will assume acting administrator duties.

"This is one of the toughest decisions I have ever had to make. Thank you for an incredible journey and for the support you have shown me," Long wrote in a letter to FEMA staff.

Long clashed with Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen last September when Nielsen appeared intent on forcing Long out of his job in the middle of hurricane season. Just as Hurricane Florence began slamming into the Carolinas, the bit-trend identified as an internal investigation became public, conducted by the inspector general from Nielsen's department who were looking into Long's use of government vehicles to travel between Washington and his home in North Carolina.

Long, who had many years of experience in emergency management, easily won Senate confirmation when nominated to the FEMA post two years ago. He was plunged into crisis almost immediately when Hurricane Harvey slammed into Texas and dropped multiple feet of rain, flooding Houston and killing dozens of people. That was followed quickly by hurricanes Irma and Maria and controversy over the administration's response to the latter's devastation in Puerto Rico.



AP

**Federal Emergency Management Agency Administrator William "Brook" Long, shown in 2017 discussing his agency's response to Hurricane Irma, announced Wednesday he's leaving his FEMA post.**

Rico, which led to a death toll of nearly 3,000.

This past year saw two more epic hurricanes, Florence and Michael, and fatal wildfires in California.

Meanwhile Long became entangled in the controversy over his use of government vehicles. His improper use of government resources cost taxpayers \$94,000 in staff salary, \$55,000 in travel expenses and \$2,000 in vehicle maintenance, the Department of Homeland Security's inspector general determined last year.

FEMA officials have said that Long took corrective steps in recent months to resolve the travel issue, which stemmed from the long-standing practice of FEMA administrators traveling in vehicles equipped with emergency communications gear.

"He took the travel issue so personally that he never got over it," said a FEMA official who was not authorized to speak to reporters.

The investigation last fall blindsided Long right at the moment he was coping with Hurricane Florence in his home state of North Carolina. Long told aides he was on the verge of quitting then but stayed on the job to lead the emergency response. Leaving FEMA in the middle of the hurricane "would have been a bad time to leave," the FEMA official said. "Now we're in a full disaster-wise."

The agency is also on a better footing with Gaynor, who is Senate-confirmed and, like Long, an experienced emergency manager.

The official said Long's reputation remained strong among FEMA staffers, many of whom believe he was forced out by Nielsen's office.

"There's no question they wanted him out," the official said, "but whether he was forced out or decided to quit is difficult to pinpoint."

# House panel backs bill expanding background checks for gun sales

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A key House committee approved a bill Wednesday to expand background checks for all sales and transfers of firearms, a first step by majority Democrats to tighten gun laws after eight years of Republican rule.

The House Judiciary Committee voted in favor of the bill 23-15, sending it to the House floor. If approved by the full House, the bill would be the most significant gun control legislation approved by either chamber of Congress in at least a decade.

Democrats have pledged additional gun legislation, including restrictions on high-capacity magazines and a measure to allow temporary removal of guns from people deemed an imminent risk to themselves or others.

Judiciary Chairman Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., called the background checks bill long overdue



J. SCOTT APLENHUE/AP

**Rep. Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., is chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, which on Wednesday approved a bill to require background checks for all sales and transfers of firearms.**

to address a "national crisis of gun violence" that claimed nearly 40,000 lives in 2017.

"Our country is awash in guns, and we have the shameful death

toll to show for it," he said.

The vote on the bill came after a contentious, daylong hearing in which Republicans offered a series of amendments, all of which were blocked by Democrats. Republicans said they were ready to offer additional amendments when Nadler shut off debate around 8 p.m., 10 hours after the hearing began.

Rep. Doug Collins, of Georgia, the panel's senior Republican, called Nadler's action "disturbing" and said it did not bode well for the two-year congressional session.

Wednesday's vote came a day before the one-year anniversary of the high school shooting in Parkland, Fla., that killed 17 people.

Rep. Ted Deutch, D-Fla., said that while the bill "can't bring back" any of those killed in Parkland or other shootings, it will help reduce gun violence.

# Serene end to border security brawl at hand?

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Congress is set to resolve its clattering brawl with President Donald Trump in uncommonly bipartisan fashion as lawmakers prepare to pass a border security compromise providing a mere sliver of the billions he's demanded for a wall with Mexico and averting a re-kindled government shutdown this weekend.

With Trump's halfhearted signature widely expected but hardly guaranteed, congressional leaders planned votes Thursday on the sweeping package. Passage first by the Republican-led Senate, then the Democratic-controlled House, was virtually certain, with sizable numbers of both parties' members set to vote "yes." Bargainers formally completed the accord moments before midnight Wednesday.

"I'm sure it's going to pass. I don't know of any drama," said the House Democrats' chief negotiator, Rep. James Clyburn, D-S.C.

Trump's assent would end a raucous legislative saga that commenced before Christmas and was ending, almost fittingly, on Valentine's Day. The low point was the historically long 35-day partial federal shutdown, which Trump sparked and was in full force when Democrats took control of the House, compelling him to share power for the first time.

Trump yielded on Jan. 25 after public opinion turned against him and congressional Republicans. He'd won not a nickel of the \$5.7 billion he'd demanded for his wall but had caused missed paychecks for legions of federal workers and federal contractors and lost services for countless others. It was a political fiasco for Trump and an early triumph for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif.

The fight left both parties dead set against another shutdown. That sentiment weakened Trump's hand and fueled the bipartisan deal, a pact that contrasts with the parties' still-raging differences over health care, taxes and investigations of the president.

The product of nearly three weeks of talks, the agreement provides almost \$1.4 billion for new barriers along the boundary. That's less than the \$1.6 billion for border security in a bipartisan Senate bill that Trump spurned months ago, and enough for building just 55 miles of barricades, not the 200-plus miles he'd sought.

Notably, the word "wall" — which fueled many a chant at Trump campaign events and rallies as president — does not appear once in the 1,768 pages of

legislation and explanatory materials. "Barriers" and "fencing" are the nouns of choice.

The compromise would also pressure Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE, to gradually detain fewer unauthorized immigrants. To the dismay of Democrats, it would still leave an agency many of them consider abusive holding thousands more immigrants than it did last year.

The measure contains money for improved surveillance equipment, more customs agents and humanitarian aid for detained immigrants. The overall bill also provides \$330 billion to finance dozens of federal agencies for the rest of the year.

Trump has talked for weeks about augmenting the agreement by taking executive action to divert money from other programs for wall construction, without congressional sign-off. He might declare a national emergency, which has drawn opposition from both parties, or invoke other authorities to tap funds targeted for military construction, disaster relief and counterdrug efforts.

Those moves could prompt congressional resistance or lawsuits, but would help assuage supporters dismayed that the president is yielding.

Rep. Mark Meadows, R-N.C., who leads the hard-right House Freedom Caucus, told reporters "it would be political suicide" if Trump signs the agreement and did nothing else to find added money.

The measure was expected to be carried by pragmatists from both parties.

Though Trump lost the highest-profile issue at stake, he all but declared victory Wednesday.

At the White House, he contended that a wall "is being built as we speak." Work on a small stretch of barriers is due to start this month in Texas' Rio Grande Valley under legislation Congress approved last year.

Swallowing the deal would mark a major concession by Trump, who has spent months calling the situation at the southern border a national security crisis.

Facing opposition from Trump, Democrats lost their bid to include language giving federal contractors back pay for wages lost during the last shutdown. Federal workers have been paid for time they were furloughed or worked without paychecks.

Also omitted was an extension of the Violence Against Women Act. Democrats say that will give them a chance later this year to add provisions for transgender people to that law.

## NATION

# Judge finds Manafort lied in Russia probe

By CHAD DAY  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort intentionally lied to investigators and a federal grand jury in the special counsel's Russia probe, a judge has ruled.

U.S. District Judge Amy Berman Jackson's decision was another loss for Manafort, a once-wealthy political consultant who rose to lead Donald Trump's 2016 campaign and now faces years in prison in two criminal cases brought in special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation.

The four-page ruling hurts Manafort's chance of receiving a reduced sentence, though Jackson said she would decide the exact impact during his sentencing next month. It also resolves a dispute that had provided new insight into how Mueller views Manafort's actions as part of the broader probe of Russian election interference and any possible coordination with Trump associates.

Prosecutors have made clear that they remain deeply interested in Manafort's interactions with a man the FBI says has ties to Russian intelligence. But it's unclear exactly what has drawn their attention and whether it relates to election interference because much of the dispute has played out in secret court hearings and blacked-out court filings.

In her ruling Wednesday, Jackson provided few new details as she found there was sufficient evidence to say Manafort broke the terms of his plea agreement by lying about three of five matters that prosecutors had singled out. The ruling was largely a rejection of Manafort's attorneys' argument that he hadn't intentionally misled investigators but rather forgot some details until his memory was refreshed.

The judge found that Manafort did mislead the FBI, prosecutors and a federal grand jury about his interactions with Konstantin Kilimnik, the co-defendant who the FBI says has ties to Russian intelligence. Prosecutors had accused Manafort of lying about several discussions the two men



ANDREW HARNIK/AP

Paul Manafort, President Donald Trump's former campaign chairman, leaves the federal courthouse in Washington on April 4, 2018. A judge has ruled Manafort lied to investigators and a federal grand jury.

## Ex-FBI official concerned probe would 'vanish'

By ERIC TUCKER  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Former FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe said in an interview aired Thursday that he worried that investigations into President Donald Trump's ties to Russia and possible obstruction of justice would be shut down after Trump fired FBI Director James Comey.

According to CBS, which conducted the interview, McCabe said Justice Department officials discussed bringing the Cabinet together to consider using the Constitution's 25th Amendment to remove Trump

from office.

McCabe, a frequent target of Trump's ire, described in the interview with CBS' "60 Minutes" that he was greatly alarmed by the possibility that the president "might have won the White House with the aid of the government of Russia." He said he assembled his investigators the day after his boss, Comey, was fired to discuss how to keep the investigations moving forward in the event he was fired or reassigned.

"I was very concerned that I was able to put the Russia case on absolutely solid ground, in an indelible fashion," McCabe said. "That were I removed

quickly, or reassigned or fired, that the case could not be closed or vanish in the night without a trace."

McCabe was fired from the FBI last year after the Justice Department inspector general concluded that he had lied during an internal investigation into a news media disclosure.

Of his actions after Comey's firing, McCabe added: "I wanted to make sure that our case was on solid ground and if somebody came in behind me and closed it and tried to walk away from it, they would not be able to do that without creating a record of why they made that decision."

had including about a possible peace plan to resolve the Russia-Ukraine conflict in Crimea.

During a sealed hearing last week, Mueller prosecutor An-

drew Weissmann said one of the discussions — an Aug. 2, 2016, meeting at the Grand Havana Room club and cigar bar in New York — went to the "larger view

of what we think is going on" and what "we think the motive here is."

"This goes, I think, very much to the heart of what the Special

Counsel's Office is investigating," Weissmann said, according to a redacted transcript of the hearing. He added, "That meeting and what happened at that meeting is of significance to the special counsel."

The meeting occurred while Manafort was still in a high-ranking role in the Trump campaign. Rick Gates, Manafort's longtime deputy and also a Trump campaign aide, attended. Prosecutors say the three men left separately so as not to draw attention to their meeting.

Weissmann said investigators were also interested in several other meetings between Kilimnik and Manafort, including when Kilimnik traveled to Washington for Trump's inauguration in January 2017. And Manafort's attorneys accidentally revealed weeks ago that prosecutors believe Manafort shared polling data with Kilimnik during the 2016 presidential campaign.

On Wednesday, Jackson found that in addition to his interactions with Kilimnik, there was sufficient evidence that Manafort had lied about a payment to a law firm representing him and about an undisclosed Justice Department investigation.

She found there wasn't enough evidence to back up two other allegations. The judge said prosecutors failed to show Manafort intentionally lied about Kilimnik's role in witness tampering or about Manafort's contacts with the Trump administration in 2017 and 2018.

Kilimnik, who lives in Russia, was charged alongside Manafort with conspiracy and obstruction of justice. He has yet to appear in a U.S. court to face the charges.

Manafort's sentencing is set for March 13. He faces up to five years in prison on two felony charges stemming from illegal lobbying he performed on behalf of Ukrainian political interests.

Separately, he faces the possibility of a decade in prison in a federal case in Virginia where he was convicted last year of tax and bank fraud crimes. Sentencing in that case was delayed pending Jackson's ruling in the plea-deal dispute.

# Diocese finds Kentucky students didn't start confrontation

Associated Press

COVINGTON, Ky. — Investigators hired by a Kentucky diocese have found that Catholic school boys didn't instigate a confrontation at the Lincoln Memorial that went viral on social media.

Covington Bishop Roger Foy initially condemned the students' behavior after a video showed a teenage boy face-to-face with a Native American man. Days later, Foy apologized for "making a statement prematurely."

The students were in Washington for an anti-abortion rally last

month when they encountered a group of black street preachers who were shouting insults at both them and a group of Native Americans. The bishop now says the students "were placed in a situation that was at once bizarre and even threatening."

"The immediate world-wide reaction to the initial video led almost everyone to believe that our students had initiated the incident and the perception of those few minutes of video became reality," Foy wrote this week in a letter to parents.

Both the Native American man,

Nathan Phillips, and the Covington student facing Phillips have said they were attempting to defuse the situation.

The four-page report on the investigation said a group of investigators from a firm called Greater Cincinnati Investigation interviewed 43 students and more than a dozen chaperones who were on the trip to Washington. Investigators reviewed social media videos, tried to contact Phillips and traveled to Michigan to attempt to speak to him, but he was not interviewed.

The videos show Phillips surrounded by students. Many interviewed students told investigators that they felt Phillips was coming into their group to join their own cheers, which were meant to drown out insults from the street preachers, who referred to themselves as the Black Hebrew Israelites. Many students reported that they were confused but did not feel threatened by Phillips, the report said.

"We found no evidence of racist statements to Mr. Phillips or members of his group," the report

said. "Some students performed a 'tomahawk chop' to the beat of Mr. Phillips' drumming and some joined in Mr. Phillips' chant."

The investigators also reviewed related videos, including one made the same day in which a young person says, "It's not rape if you enjoy it." The investigators say they concluded that person was not a Covington Catholic student.

The investigators were hired by a law firm that represents the school and the Catholic diocese, the report said.



## NATION

# Storm brings mudslide risk in West

By JOHN ANTCAK  
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Heavy rain again raised the risk of mudslides in Southern California burn areas where evacuations were ordered during a powerful storm that flooded roads, toppled trees and cut power farther north.

The system known as an atmospheric river snaked through southern Oregon, Northern California and western Nevada while feeding on a deep plume of moisture stretching across the Pacific Ocean to near Hawaii, the National Weather Service said.

The tempest followed more than a week of severe weather in the Pacific Northwest and was the latest in a series that has all but eliminated drought-level dryness in California this winter.

Mandatory evacuations were in effect for areas near a burn scar in the Santa Ana Mountains southeast of Los Angeles where officials said the risk of debris flows was high.

Tim Suber said he has lost count of how many times his hillside neighborhood in Lake Elsinore has been evacuated because of the city's devastating wildfire and this winter's succession of storms.

"I'm not going this time," Suber said Wednesday after Riverside County sheriff's deputies warned him that he could end up trapped if roads flooded. "We've got 35 chickens and a daughter who won't leave them behind. So we're staying."

The real estate agent said he's confident culverts and washes in the area will handle any runoff after crews have cleared dozens of truckloads of dirt following the last storm. But just in case, "my car is gassed up and ready to go at a moment's notice," said Suber, 54.

Winter storm warnings were posted in the snow-laden Sierra Nevada, where the forecast said up to 7 feet of new snow could be dumped at elevations above 9,000 feet.



DAMON ARTHUR, THE RECORD SEARCHLIGHT (USA TODAY NETWORK/AP)

**This pileup in Anderson, Calif., on Wednesday is one of many caused by a winter storm that hit the West, flooding roads, toppling trees and cutting power while raising threats of debris flows from wildfire scars.**

The National Weather Service recorded winds gusting to 132 mph atop the Mount Rose ski resort southwest of Reno, Nev.

A backcountry avalanche warning was issued throughout the Sierra.

"We are still trying to dig out of the last system, and we have another big storm here," said Kevin "Coop" Cooper, spokesman for Kirkwood Mountain Resort south of Lake Tahoe.

Five passengers suffered minor injuries when a Delta Air Lines flight headed from Southern California to Seattle encountered severe turbulence in the storm and was forced to make an emergency landing in Reno. Photos on social media showed a beverage cart upended and snacks and soda cans littering the aisle. One

passenger tweeted the plane did two nose dives in "crazy turbulence" but the crew "handled it perfectly."

Snow heavily affected stretches of vital Interstate 5 in far Northern California, causing closures and forcing tire-chain requirements.

A local state of emergency was declared in Shasta County because of significant storm damage, a Sheriff's Office statement said. Redding, the county seat, turned its library into a warming center.

Power outages also hit thousands of utility customers in the region.

Widespread roadway flooding occurred north of San Francisco Bay. To the east, a swath of California's Central Valley was under a flood warning.

At one point, flight arrivals at San Francisco International Airport were experiencing delays of several hours, the Federal Aviation Administration said.

In Washington state, thousands of Puget Sound Energy customers lost power, and Interstate 90 was closed for a second day Wednesday across Snoqualmie Pass in the Cascade Mountains. The town of North Bend declared a state of emergency because of several feet of snow.

In Oregon, transportation officials closed about 20 miles of the westbound lanes of Interstate 84 in the Columbia River Gorge east of Portland because of icy conditions that caused numerous wrecks and stranded drivers for hours.

## Denver's teachers might be back soon

Associated Press

DENVER — Denver school administrators and the city's striking teachers reached a tentative deal Thursday to end a three-day educator walkout with a contract agreement that gives teachers raises of 7 to 11 percent, built-in cost-of-living increases and opportunities for future salary increases.

The key sticking point of variable bonuses for teachers working in tougher environments will be studied to determine if they help retain teachers in schools, the teachers' union said.

The deal was reached after negotiations that went through the night and it was announced shortly before schools opened Thursday morning. Superintendent Susana Cordova and teacher union president Henry Roman hugged after signing it. Teachers were encouraged to return to their classrooms if they felt ready, even though the deal awaits ratification by the full union membership.

More than half the district's teachers went on strike Monday after unions said over pay broke down. Gov. Jared Polis, a Democrat whose administration declined to use its power to block the strike, praised the deal though he said he wished it had been reached before a walkout.

Denver teachers are the biggest winners in today's agreement," he said.

The teachers had demanded that the school system should rely less on bonuses for educators in high-poverty and high-priority schools. The district gives bonuses to teachers who work in schools with students from low-income families, in schools that are designated high priority or in positions that are considered hard to staff, such as special education or speech language pathology. It sees the bonuses as key to boosting the academic performance of poor and minority students.

Teachers on the bargaining team said bonuses alone will not keep their colleagues at high-poverty and other priority schools.

Teachers have said the reliance on bonuses leads to high turnover, which they say hurts students, and that spending money on smaller class sizes and adding support staff, like counselors, is the best way to help disadvantaged students.

The district said some of the extra money being put into teacher pay will come from cutting about 150 jobs in the district's central office and eliminating performance bonuses for staffers in the office.

The walkout came about a year after West Virginia teachers launched the national "Red4Ed" movement with a nine-day strike in which they won 5 percent pay raises. Most recently, Los Angeles teachers held a six-day strike last month.

## White supremacist gets life sentence for killing black man with a sword

Associated Press

NEW YORK — A white supremacist who killed a black man with a sword wanted to ignite a worldwide race war, a prosecutor told a judge who sentenced the man Wednesday to life in prison without parole.

Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance read excerpts from James Jackson's hate-filled manifesto as he decreed the "horror of his actions" when he fatally stabbed Timothy Caughman, 66, in March 2017 after stalking a number of black men in New York City.

"James Jackson is a white supremacist and a terrorist," Vance said of the Baltimore man and veteran who served in Afghanistan.

Given a chance to speak, Jackson, who is white, said he wanted to apologize for "this horrible and unnecessary tragedy."

"It never should have happened," he added. "And if I could do it all over again, this never would have happened, for sure."

State Supreme Court Justice Laura Vande kept her remarks brief.

"You killed a man solely because he was black," she said. "And there is no excuse for your actions."

Richard Peek, a cousin of the victim who spoke for the family, read aloud an "open letter to a murderer" in court, saying "one cruel man's intolerance turned many people's words

upside-down."

Caughman, who was remembered as a gentleman and a good neighbor, was attacked while collecting bottles for recycling.

Jackson, 30, told police he traveled from Baltimore to carry out the attack because New York is the media capital of the world. He said the slaying was intended to be practice for further assaults on black people.

Vance said Jackson's manifesto was on a digital storage drive recovered after his arrest. The prosecutor said he did not want to make it public in its entirety to avoid helping to spread its hateful content. But he wanted to put some of it on the record for the first time.



SETH WENIG/AP

**James Jackson was sentenced Wednesday to life in prison without parole for killing a black man with a sword in New York.**

"The racial world war starts today," Vance said, reading from the manifesto.

He said Jackson called for military and biological warfare aimed at the "extermination" of black people and urged authorities in the United Kingdom, China and Russia to get involved.

## NATION

# Parkland shooting upends Fla. school life

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON  
Associated Press

OKEECHOBEE, Fla. — Some students have difficulty trusting classmates outside their circle. Parents say interactions with school staff are more impersonal. Teachers worry that added security detracts from learning.

The Parkland massacre a year ago upended school life in Florida. In the year since a gunman fatally shot 14 students and three school staffers, the state's districts have reshaped the K-12 experience, adopting new rules for entering campus, hiring more police and holding frequent safety drills. Some schools trained teams of armed employees to confront attackers.

"You can't really trust other students. They all have different mindsets," said Allen White, a senior at the lone high school in the central Florida farming town of Okeechobee.

Reflecting at a skate park near campus, White and four friends said their school's atmosphere changed after Feb. 14, 2018. Only last month, suspicious social media posts put Okeechobee High on alert, prompting many students, including White, to stay home.

"I don't really feel safe. It has become a real-life epidemic," he said. He attributed school violence primarily to bullying and mental health and said schools need to better address those issues.

Okeechobee is one of at least 24 Florida districts that have started



Sgt. Michael Hazellief talks to "guardians" during a training session to respond to active shooters in Okeechobee, Fla., in January.

training and arming noninstructional personnel.

On a recent afternoon, four school staffers met secretly at a grassy basin dug into the fertile land that borders Lake Okeechobee. They grabbed ammunition from a military-style container and loaded a handgun while standing by a picnic table. For hours, they practiced shooting at silhouette targets with sheriff deputies.

Authorities keep the identities of these "guardians" secret, citing security reasons. One of the women practicing said the 140 hours of required training adds to a busy schedule, but she feels compelled to do it just in case.

"Protecting the children's safety

is first," she said. "We won't know that I am one of their guardians. But I will be prepared."

In Miami, parents say some schools—even preschools—have lost a sense of community since Parkland. Once-mundane morning drop-offs, for instance, have turned into a regimented affair.

Some schools previously allowed parents to drop off students directly with their teachers. Now children as young as 4 or 5 must be dropped off outside and walked inside by staff, cutting off opportunities for informal interaction with teachers.

"We are treated like we are criminals," said Karilyn Bacallao, a former teacher who now has two elementary school children.

"The last time I heard the news it has never been the parent who hears on the day of the shooting," she said.

Bacallao said she worries about how the new measures are affecting her 7-year-old daughter, who came home from class in tears one day in December.

"She starts telling me, 'There was blood in the bathroom, our teacher wasn't there, and there was a bad guy with a gun,'" she said.

Bacallao learned later that the school was on lockdown because of a nearby robbery. The kids were gathered in the cafeteria with a school counselor who turned the lights off and told them to draw in the dark. She said children heard sirens outside. Nobody explained the blood in the bathroom. Her daughter later found out it was nothing more than a nose bleed.

Teenagers are increasingly getting used to hearing about guns on campus.

Terезie Roberts is a member of Moms Demand Action, a nonprofit that fights to reform gun laws. She has two children in high school who now talk more about threats, but it is often unclear whether they are rumors or real.

"My son told me that he and his friends always talk and say that they could fight the next target. It almost feels like a game to them," Roberts said.

Ivy Schamis, who was teaching Holocaust studies at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School when her classroom came under attack, said more students now ask to visit the school's wellness

center. The teacher whose classroom was across the hall from hers on the day of the shooting did not return to school this year, she said.

Schamis said it was "preposterous" that students have to come to school "thinking what may happen as opposed to what they are learning."

"It's absolutely disrupting education," she said.

A 2016 study published in the Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis journal analyzed the effects of 36 high school shootings on math and English tests in 12 states over three years. It found that enrollment declined among ninth-grade students, and test results dropped significantly when comparing those schools with shooters in the district.

At the state Capitol, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and GOP state lawmakers want to expand the existing guardian program so more teachers can have guns. Senate Republicans filed the proposal last week.

Before the shooting, Schamis said, she would have "felt that only military and law enforcement should really carry guns." But now "I keep going over it in my head."

Roberts shared the story of the school's athletic director, Chris Hixon, a Navy veteran who was shot in the legs as he ran toward suspect Nikolas Cruz.

"Had he had a gun, he might have been able to take the shooter down before any more damage was done. So now, I am not sure."

## Strangers' suspicions rankle parents of mixed-race children

By JONATHAN J. COOPER  
Associated Press

PHOENIX — Amberkatherine DeCory carried photos of her daughter's birth certificate in her diaper bag in case she had to prove that the lighter skinned girl was really hers. Cyndee Rafferty gives her husband a letter explaining that he has permission to travel with their 5-year-old biracial daughter.

Families like theirs were not surprised when they heard that Cindy McCain had reported a woman to police for possible human trafficking because the widow of Sen. John McCain saw her at the airport with a toddler of a different ethnicity. Officers investigated and found no evidence of wrongdoing.

Parents whose children have a different complexion say they regularly face suspicion and the assumption that they must be watching someone else's kids.

"This is a problem that, to be frank, well-meaning white people get themselves into," said Rafferty, who is black and whose husband is white. "They think, 'If it doesn't make sense to me, it must not be right.'"

After McCain's report, Rafferty posted to Twitter a selfie of her with her two children, ages 5 and 5 months.

"I know they don't look like me, but I assure you, I grew them in my belly," Rafferty wrote to McCain.

Earlier this month, McCain claimed on Phoenix radio station KTAR that the woman was waiting for a man who bought the child to get off a plane and that her Jan.



Cyndee Rafferty takes a selfie with her two children, Devin, 5, and Leo, 5 months old, last month in New York.

30 report to police had stopped the trafficking. She urged people to speak up if they see anything odd.

"I came in from a trip I'd been on," McCain said. "I spotted — it looked odd — it was a woman of a different ethnicity than the child, this little toddler she had. Something didn't click with me. I told people 'radio your gut.'"

She said she spoke about her suspicions with police "and they went over and ques-

tioned her. And, by God, she was trafficking that kid."

Phoenix Police Sgt. Armando Carbajal confirmed that McCain requested a welfare check on a child at the airport, but said officers found "no evidence of criminal conduct or child endangerment."

McCain has declined interview requests and has not said if anything besides the difference in ethnicity led her to suspect trafficking. A spokesman for the McCain Institute for International Leadership at Arizona State University said McCain was "only thinking about the possible ramifications of a criminal act, not the ethnicity of the possible trafficker."

After police debunked her claim, McCain reiterated the importance of speaking up when something looks wrong.

"I apologize if anything else I have said on this matter distracts from 'if you see something, say something,'" she wrote on Twitter.

Rafferty, 38, of New York, was surprised that McCain, who adopted a daughter from Bangladesh, would make the same something's-not-right assumption that mixed-race families grapple with constantly. It's not always summoning the police. Other, more common ways of calling out the differences sting too.

For Rafferty, the questions are frustrating and offensive: "Whose baby is that?" from a woman in the grocery store. "Where's her beautiful, golden skin and curly hair?" from a clerk at the office who had a distinct idea of how a biracial

child should look. "You're the ...?" followed by a pause for her to fill in the blank with "mom."

And if she pushes a stroller on Manhattan's Upper West Side, everyone assumes she's the nanny. At the park, neither the mothers nor the caregivers know whether to embrace her in their camp.

DeCory, 38, a police officer outside Minneapolis who has black and Native American ancestry, said the anxiety between mom and baby is a constant challenge for mixed-race families that isn't talked about enough.

She recalls being haunted by a terrifying vision she couldn't shake: Someone would question whether she was truly the mother of her daughter, and she wouldn't be able to prove it. She'd imagine her daughter, Mila, being placed between her and a white woman while someone in authority watched to see which way she crawled.

Until her daughter could speak, DeCory carried her birth certificate and even a photo of her giving birth, just in case she had to prove that her light-haired, blue-eyed child was truly her own. As Mila has gotten older, her hair has darkened. She's now 11.

DeCory didn't face the same anxieties with her other two children, who have darker skin closer to her own.

"I would get anxiety going out with her in public," DeCory said. "It was very reluctant to breastfeed her in public or do anything that would draw attention to me."

## NATION

## Fentanyl overdose deaths hit Arizona hard

By ANITA SNOW  
Associated Press

TUCSON, Ariz. — Aaron Francisco Chavez swallowed at least one of the sky blue pills at a Halloween party before falling asleep forever. He became yet another victim killed by a flood of illicit fentanyl smuggled from Mexico into the Southwest — a profitable new business for drug gangs that has pushed the synthetic opioid to the top spot for fatal U.S. overdoses.

Three others at the party in Tucson also took the pills nicknamed “Mexican oxy,” and police flagged down by partygoers saved them by administering naloxone overdose reversal medication. But the treatment came too late for Chavez, who died at age 19.

The four thought they were taking oxycodone, a much less powerful opioid, investigators believe. The death of Chavez and many others, officials said, illustrate how Arizona and other southwestern states bordering Mexico have become a hot spot in the nation’s fentanyl crisis. Fentanyl deaths tripled in Arizona alone from 2015 through 2017.

“It’s the worst I’ve seen in 30 years, this toll that it’s taken on families,” said Doug Coleman, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration special agent in charge of Arizona. “The crack (cocaine) crisis was not as bad.”

With plenty of pills and powder sold locally out of the arriving fentanyl shipments that are also distributed around the U.S., the drug that has surpassed heroin for overdose deaths has touched all Arizona demographic groups. Chavez’s family says he was working at a restaurant as a prep cook with dreams of becoming a chef and trying to turn his life around after serving prison time for a robbery conviction.

Also killed in the state over the last year by the pills that go for \$9 to \$30 each were a 17-year-old star high school baseball pitcher from a Phoenix suburb and a pair of 19-year-old best friends and prominent former high school athletes from the mountain town of Prescott Valley. The parents of one, Gunner Bundrick, said their son’s death left “a hole in our hearts.”

Popping the pills at parties “is a lot more widespread than we



Seanna Leilani Chavez, the sister of Aaron Francisco Chavez, pauses as she looks at family photos while standing next to a shrine for Aaron at the family home earlier this month in Tucson, Ariz. Aaron Chavez died of a fentanyl overdose at the age of 19.

ROSS D. FRANKLIN/AP

know,” said Yavapai County Sheriff’s Lt. Nate Auvenshine. “There’s less stigma to taking a pill than putting a needle in your arm, but one of these pills can have enough fentanyl for three people.”

Stamped with “M” on one side and “30” on the other to make them look like legitimate oxycodone, the pills started showing up in Arizona in recent years as the Sinaloa cartel’s newest drug product, said Tucson Police Lt. Christian Wildblood.

The fentanyl that killed Chavez was among 1,000 pills sneaked across the border crossing last year in Nogales, Ariz., by a woman who was paid \$200 to tote them and gave two to Chavez at the party, according to court documents. It’s unknown if he took one or both.

At the same crossing last month, U.S. officials announced their biggest fentanyl bust ever — nearly 254 pounds seized from a truckload of cucumbers, enough to potentially kill millions. Valued at \$3.5 million, most was in powder form and more than 2 pounds was made up of pills.

The tablets in most cases are manufactured in primitive conditions with pill presses purchased

online, and the amount of fentanyl in each pill can vary widely, Wildblood said.

“There is no quality control,” he said.

While Chinese shipments were long blamed for illegal fentanyl entering the U.S., Mexico’s Army in November 2017 discovered a rustic fentanyl lab in a remote part of Sinaloa state and seized precursors, finished fentanyl and production equipment — suggesting some of it is now being synthesized across the U.S. border.

Most fentanyl smuggled from Mexico is about 10 percent pure and often hidden in vehicles at official border crossings around Nogales and San Diego, Customs and Border Protection data show. A decreasing number of smaller shipments with purity of up to 90 percent still enter the U.S. in packages sent from China.

Although 85 percent of the fentanyl from Mexico is seized at San Diego area border crossings, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration’s 2018 National Drug Threat Assessment said seizures have surged at Arizona’s border and elsewhere around the state.

DEA statistics show Arizona

fentanyl seizures rose to 445 pounds, including 379,557 pills, in the fiscal year ending in October 2018, up from 172 pounds, including 54,984 pills, during the previous 12-month period.

The Sinaloa cartel’s ability to ramp up its own production of fentanyl and label it oxycodone shows the group’s business acumen and why it remains among the world’s top criminal organizations, despite the conviction in New York this week of cartel kingpin Joaquin “El Chapo” Guzman Loera, Coleman said.

“If they see a market for their stuff, they’ll make it and bring it out,” he said.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says fentanyl is now the drug involved in the most fatal overdoses in the U.S., with fatalities from synthetic opioids including fentanyl jumping more than 45 percent from 2016 to 2017, when they accounted for some 28,000 of about 70,000 overdose deaths of all kinds.

Fentanyl was also involved more than any other drug in the majority of overdose deaths in 2016, the year the pop artist Prince died after taking fake Vi-

codin laced with fentanyl. Heroin was responsible for the most drug overdose deaths each of the four years before that.

CDC figures for Arizona show the statewide deaths involving synthetic opioids excluding methadone, largely from fentanyl, rose from 72 in 2015 to 123 in 2016 and then skyrocketed to 267 in 2017.

In the first federal conviction of its kind in Arizona that linked a death to distribution of any drug, a woman from a Phoenix suburb last year got 12 years in prison for selling fentanyl tablets that killed a 38-year-old Arizona man.

In Tucson, Chavez’ relatives wonder why the woman accused of smuggling the pills across the border allegedly decided to hand them out at the party, saying they were Percocet, which contains oxycodone and acetaminophen, and “something else,” according to court documents.

The woman, Jocelyn Sanchez, denied describing them that way. She was charged with transporting and transferring narcotics. Her lawyer, Joel Chorny, declined to discuss the case.

Nicknamed “Sonny Boy,” Chavez was the third of 10 children born

to Leslie Chavez. He was brought to the U.S. as an infant and deported back to Mexico last year, two months before he died. In a phone interview, Sanchez



Sanchez

Chavez said Mexican officials arranged to have her son’s body brought across the border so she could say goodbye.

She said she had “heard about how these pills were killing people” but never thought it would happen to one of her children.

Chavez had a 2-year-old daughter and, despite his robbery conviction, “was trying to get his life together; he was trying to be good” for the toddler, and his sister, Seanna Leilani Chavez.

The dealers, she said, are only interested in profits.

“They will sell you poison, take your money, and not think twice about how they could possibly be killing someone’s son, father, brother or grandson,” she said.

## EPA sets toxins response plan amid criticism from lawmakers

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Environmental Protection Agency is expected to announce a plan for dealing with a class of long-lasting chemical contaminants amid complaints from members of Congress and environmentalists that it’s not moved aggressively enough to regulate them.

So-called forever chemicals — perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl compounds, or PFAS — pose “a very important threat,” acting EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler said in an interview with “ABC News

Live” ahead of a scheduled briefing Thursday in Philadelphia.

Wheeler said the agency was moving forward with the process under the Safe Drinking Water Act that could lead to new safety thresholds for the presence of the chemicals in water, but he did not commit in the interview to setting standards.

The chemicals are found in consumer products ranging from fabrics, rugs and carpets to cooking pots and pans, outdoor gear, shampoo, shaving cream, makeup and even dental floss. Increasing numbers of states have found them seeping into

drinking water supplies.

Scientific studies have found “associations” between the chemicals and cancer, thyroid disease, ulcerative colitis and other health issues.

With the Senate considering whether to confirm him as EPA chief, Democratic and Republican lawmakers have pressed Wheeler to establish mandatory limits for PFAS in public water systems.

Republican Sen. Shelley Moore Capito, whose state of West Virginia was one of the first where PFAS contamination was linked to human health problems, said she

voated for Wheeler’s appointment in committee earlier this month only after he privately assured her the EPA would tackle the problem.

Capito was one of 20 senators who wrote to Wheeler demanding ceilings on two phased-out types of PFAS chemicals. They pressed Wheeler for other “immediate actions” to protect the public from other versions of the industrial compounds.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., also called for legal limits and said if the EPA balked, Wheeler “didn’t deserve” to run the agency.



## WORLD

# Pence calls on Europe to quit deal with Iran

By MATTHEW LEE  
AND ARON HELLER  
Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland — The Trump administration lashed out at some of America's closest traditional allies on Thursday, accusing Britain, France and Germany of trying to "break" U.S. sanctions against Iran and calling on European nations to join the United States in withdrawing from the landmark 2015 Iranian nuclear deal.

In an unusually blunt speech to a Middle East conference in Poland, Vice President Mike Pence slammed the three countries and the European Union as a whole for remaining parties to the agreement after the Trump administration withdrew from it last year and reimposed tough sanctions on Iran.

The harsh criticism threatened to further chill U.S.-European ties, already badly strained, including over the Iran focus of the Warsaw conference, co-hosted by the U.S. and Poland. France and Germany had declined to send their top diplomats to the foreign minister-level meeting, and EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini also stayed away.

Pence was especially critical of Britain, France and Germany for unveiling last month a new financial mechanism that U.S. officials believe is intended to keep the nuclear deal alive by evading American sanctions. Pence praised other nations for complying with the sanctions by reducing Iranian oil imports but said the Europeans fell short.

He said the mechanism, known as the "special purpose vehicle," is "an effort to break American sanctions against Iran's murderous regime." "It's an ill-advised step that will only strengthen Iran, weaken the EU and create still more distance between Eu-



CZAREK SOKOLOWSKI/AP

**Vice President Mike Pence speaks at a conference on Peace and Security in the Middle East in Warsaw, Poland, on Thursday.**

rope and the United States."

Pence then called for Europe to abandon the nuclear agreement.

"The time has come for our European partners to withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal and join with us as we bring the economic and diplomatic pressure necessary to give the Iranian people, the region and the world the peace, security and freedom they deserve," he said.

Earlier, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called Iran the top security threat to the Middle East and said confronting the country is key to reaching peace in the entire region.

The U.S. and Poland say the conference is aimed at promoting peace and security in the Middle East and discussing issues such as Syria, Yemen, the fight against Islamic State, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, cybercrime and terrorism.

The conference was attended by representatives from numerous Arab countries, but notable absences include Russia, China, and the Palestinians, who have called for the meeting to be boycotted.

Iran has denounced the gathering as an American anti-Iran "circus" aimed at "demonizing" Iran.



DITA ALANKARA/AP

**North Korean men walk near the West Sea Barrage in Nampo, North Korea, on Feb. 2. North Korea is looking at tidal power as an alternative energy source to reduce its reliance on oil imports.**

## North Korea exploring alternative energy to ease sanctions pressure

By ERIC TALMADGE  
Associated Press

NAMPO, North Korea — Power-strapped North Korea is exploring two ambitious alternative energy sources — tidal power and coal-based synthetic fuels — that could greatly improve living standards and reduce its reliance on oil imports and vulnerability to sanctions.

Finding a lasting energy source that isn't vulnerable to sanctions has long been a top priority for North Korean officials. Leader Kim Jong Un used his New Year's address last month to call on the country to "radically increase the production of electricity" and singled out the coal-mining industry as a "primary front in developing the self-supporting economy."

For the longer-term, he stressed the importance of atomic, wind and tidal power.

Since further development of atomic energy is unlikely anytime soon, the power-scarce country is developing technology to "gasify" coal into substitute motor fuels. It also is looking into using huge sea barriers with electricity-generating turbines to harness the power of the ocean's tides.

Coal and hydropower are North Korea's main energy resources. The North imports nearly all of

its oil and petroleum products from China. Solar panels are visible just about everywhere, from urban balconies to rural farm buildings and military installations. Wind remains a minor energy source.

The North's renewed focus on oil alternatives underscores what some foreign observers believe are two of its long-term best bets.

Kim's late father, Kim Jong Il, tried to get international support for developing nuclear power in the 1990s before the North ultimately opted instead for nuclear weapons. That brought some of the most intense sanctions ever applied by the United Nations against the country, making its energy situation even more precarious.

But coal is something North Korea has in abundance.

Given North Korea's limited options, it's a technology that appears to be paying off.

The output from just one gasifier unit reportedly destined for the North Sunchon Chemical Plant, north of Pyongyang, could yield synthetic fuel amounting to about 10 percent of the North's recent petroleum supply, according to a study for the Nautilus Institute by David von Hippel and Peter Hayes, two of the foremost experts on the issue. The study

cited as one of its sources a Wall Street Journal report from December that tracked the unit to a Chinese exporter.

The facility is believed to be a center of "C-1" technology, which uses coal to make a kind of gas used to produce synthetic fuels, industrial chemicals and fertilizers.

Now that China has reduced its coal imports from the North in line with the sanctions, there's more available for gasification.

The North's interest in tidal energy also reflects a practical desire to exploit existing resources.

Glyn Ford, a former member of the European Parliament with extensive experience with the North, said he has had several discussions with North Korean officials regarding tidal power and even helped arrange a study tour to a facility in the U.K. a decade ago. He said they have tried to invite experts to the North.

The country is perfectly situated for tidal power.

"The bulk of the Korean Peninsula's west coast is a rich tidal power resource," Ford said in a telephone interview with The Associated Press. "There are some detailed studies of the potential in South Korea and the same resources are there to be exploited north of the Demilitarized Zone."

## China, US open trade talks as Beijing says exports rebound

By JOE McDONALD  
Associated Press

BEIJING — U.S. and Chinese negotiators opened talks Thursday on a sprawling trade dispute as Beijing reported its January exports rebounded despite President Donald Trump's tariff increases.

Trump said earlier the talks could help decide whether he'd end the fighting over technology ambitions by going

ahead with more penalty duties March 2 on \$200 billion of Chinese goods.

The battle between the two biggest economies has fueled fears it will drag on weakening global growth. China's economy grew at its slowest pace in three decades last year, adding to pressure on communist leaders to reach a settlement.

Both sides have expressed optimism but released no details.

U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and his Chinese counterpart, Vice Premier Liu He, shook hands at the start of the meeting at a government guesthouse but said nothing to reporters.

The U.S. delegation also includes Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and David Malpass, a Treasury undersecretary who is Trump's nominee for World Bank president.

Economists and business groups say the planned two days of negotiations allow too little time to reach a final settlement, but Beijing hopes to persuade Trump enough progress is being made to forestall the new tariff increases.

There was no indication whether negotiators are making progress on the thorniest dispute: U.S. pressure on Beijing to scale back plans for government-led cre-

ation of Chinese global leaders in robotics and other technologies.

A Ministry of Commerce spokesman, Gao Feng, told reporters at a regular weekly briefing that he had no details on the status of the talks.

Meanwhile, customs data released Thursday showed Chinese exports in January rose 9.1 percent from a year earlier, recovering from December's 3.5 percent decline.

## WORLD

## Congo measles outbreak a warning for US on vaccinations

By SIOBHAN O'GRADY  
The Washington Post

In early October, three cases of measles were confirmed in Antananarivo, the capital of Madagascar. The highly contagious virus quickly spread across the island nation; by the next month, thousands of cases had been confirmed. The crisis only grew from there.

Madagascar has poor health-care infrastructure and a low vaccination rate. But public health experts say its dangerous measles outbreak still offers a warning for anti-vaccination campaigners in the United States, where a smaller-scale flare-up has led to more than 100 confirmed cases since the beginning of the year.

Conspiracy theories that vaccines are ineffective or can cause certain disabilities and medical conditions have led a number of American parents to resist vaccinating their children.

"Madagascar started with a few cases; now, we are almost close to 60,000 and the cases are still increasing," said Richard Mihigo, coordinator for the World Health Organization's immunization and vaccine development program at its regional office for Africa. "I think societies like the U.S. and western Europe should ring the bell and see ... this is something that could also happen to them."

The outbreak in Madagascar is due in large part to weak infrastructure that has made it difficult to achieve widespread vaccination. Both there and elsewhere, health workers face extraordinary circumstances, and at times take immense personal risks, to deliver vaccines to vulnerable communities.

In 2013, health workers in northern Nigeria were wrapping up an immunization drive to help vaccinate children against the polio virus when armed gunmen

appeared and opened fire, killing at least nine of them.

Targeted killings of health care workers are even more common in Pakistan, where medical staff have also been killed while delivering vaccines to rural areas or conflict zones in an attempt to control the spread of polio.

"When we see that a society where this is not the case sees it as something to take for granted, it's very sad," Mihigo said of the United States and Europe.

Even outside of high-risk areas or conflict zones, delivering vaccines in developing countries can pose serious logistical challenges.

Natalie Roberts, emergency operations manager at Doctors Without Borders, said that in parts of Congo, where a measles outbreak is ongoing, staff with the nonprofit group will travel days by motorbike or canoe to access isolated villages.

"You can spend five days going from one place to the next area and then spend eight hours trying to get the car out of a hole and reach the village you're trying to access, and you notice there are maybe 100 children in the village," she said. "And you've spent days and days to get there."

In places like Madagascar, health workers face similar logistical challenges while delivering vaccines. For measles herd immunity to be effective, public health experts recommend that at least 95 percent of the general population be vaccinated. In Madagascar, the estimated immunization rate was just 58 percent as of 2017.

In Washington state, the immunization rate is around 90 percent.

"The reasons that children aren't vaccinated in Congo are very different from the reasons children aren't vaccinated in America or Europe," Roberts

said. "But in the end, the result is the same."

In the United States, vaccines that can prevent the spread of measles and other deadly diseases are readily available, stirring frustrations in the public health community over why those who have access to vaccines would refuse them.

"You have at your disposal all the benefits of modern life that are supposed to make your life healthy and strong and long," said J. Stephen Morrison, director of the Global Health Policy Center at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "And then a segment of the population rejects that. It's exasperating."

This year, the WHO named "vaccine hesitancy" one of the top threats to global health. Measles has increased by 30 percent globally, the group's report said, adding that "some countries that were close to eliminating the disease have seen a resurgence."

## S. Korea won't apologize for Japanese emperor remarks

By JIHYE LEE  
Bloomberg

The speaker of South Korea's parliament said he had no intention to apologize for his comments about Japan's emperor, suggesting the issue could continue to stoke tensions between the neighbors.

National Assembly Speaker Moon Hee-sang said there was no reason to show contrition for calling on Emperor Akihito to personally apologize to women forced to work in colonial-era Japanese military brothels, the Yonhap News Agency reported. Moon was responding to Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who called the comments "extremely inappropriate" as his government demanded an apology and retraction.

"I don't know why this is becoming such a big issue," Moon told reporters during a visit to Washington on Tuesday, according to Yonhap. He said he was only seeking an apology for the former sex slaves — euphemistically called "comfort women" — and that he found Abe's response "incomprehensible."

Japan's Foreign Ministry declined to respond to the Yonhap report and said there was no change to the country's request for a retraction.

Most South Koreans believe Japan hasn't sufficiently apologized for its actions during the occupation, while many Japanese argue past statements of regret, which include official apologies to the comfort women, should have been sufficient.

## Meet the Team!



**Monday, February 18, 2019 (5 p.m. - 8 p.m.)**  
Marriott Hotel Sindelfingen  
(Refreshments will be served)

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## WORLD

# Putin's Russia aims to recast Afghan War

By AMIE FERRIS-ROTMAN  
The Washington Post

MOSCOW — The Red Army veterans took to the stage and belted out songs from the battlefield: clashes with the enemy and a wartime thirst for Russian vodka. A crowd of Afghan War elites finger-tapped along to the familiar beat.

The rock concert was something like theme music for the Kremlin's attempt at rewriting history, turning the defeat in Afghanistan into a patriotic victory for Mother Russia.

"Do you, comrade, remember Afghanistan? Glows of fires, Muslim cries!" sang the band Cascade — composed of camouflage- and medal-wearing veterans, including a percussionist with an Afghan drum and a keyboard player who lost his leg in combat.

It was just one of the ways Russia is marking 30 years since the Soviet military's humiliating exit from Afghanistan after a decade of war that strained the Soviet military and left a gaping hole in the country's finances.

The withdrawal in February 1989 also had a deeper sting for the Kremlin.

The Red Army was pushed out of Afghanistan by U.S.-backed mujahideen fighters, ending a key proxy battle of the Cold War. Two years later, the Soviet Union collapsed.

Pro-democracy movements in Eastern Europe were gaining steam and becoming less fearful of a Soviet resurgence.

The Kremlin in 1989 called the Afghan War "a political mistake." Russian lawmakers, urged by President Vladimir Putin, are now trying to make a 180.

On Friday, the date the last Red Army soldier withdrew from Afghanistan 30 years ago, the Russian parliament plans to pass a resolution declaring the war was justified. Putin then is expected to lead a lavish commemoration ceremony at the Kremlin.

"These courageous men were serving their homeland; they were fulfilling their duty," na-



AMIE FERRIS-ROTMAN/The Washington Post

Cascade, a Russian rock band composed of Afghan War veterans, plays in Moscow's Crocus City Hall on Saturday as Russia marks 30 years since the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan.

tionalist politician and Afghanisthan veteran Sergey Baburin said at the opening of a photography exhibit last week in the Russian capital whose self-stated intention was to show the more palatable side of the war.

History makeovers are not uncommon in many countries. Other uncomfortable truths cannot be glossed over — such as how the anti-Soviet mujahideen helped create al-Qaida and the Taliban, which have both opposed the West.

But Russia's remake of the Afghan War is among the most comprehensive and systematic.

It is part of Moscow's wider attempt to mold a historical narrative that fits the current ideology under Putin, whose leadership has projected the image of a strong Russia with an unblem-

ished past.

The parliament resolution denounces the 1989 condemnation of the war, saying it was "at odds with the principles of historical justice," and maintains that Moscow sent troops to Afghanistan in December 1979 at the behest of the Kremlin-backed Communist government in Kabul. (In fact, the Soviet invasion forces overthrew that government, assassinated its leader and installed a rival Communist faction completely beholden to Moscow.)

The rehabilitation of the war also comes amid Moscow's renewed influence in Afghanistan. In recent months Russia has played host to two major meetings between the Taliban and Afghan power-brokers aimed at finding a way to end the current U.S.-led war.

Today's government in Kabul is unlikely to warm to the idea of Moscow's defense of the war, especially given its recent rebuke of President Donald Trump's revisionist praise of the Soviet invasion.

Unlike other initiatives — such as Putin's restoration of the Stalin-era national anthem at the start of his rule or recasting Ivan the Terrible from bloody to heroic — the rehab work on Afghanistan came as somewhat of a surprise.

As recently as November, the country's Channel 1 TV station, a state-run heavyweight, has been airing the fictional series "Stormy Weather," depicting war veterans as the dregs of society in the chaotic 1990s. The show received rave reviews.

For some of the conflict's veterans, the government's flip-flop

only adds to long-held feelings of despair.

"Such a resolution is really awful," said Valery Shiryayev, who was a decorated military translator in Afghanistan and is now deputy director of independent newspaper Novaya Gazeta.

"My friends, who are other veterans, do not think the Afghan War was a good thing. It was a terrible mistake."

Around 15,000 Soviet soldiers were killed, along with at least 1 million Afghans. Initially, the war was kept hidden from public view, and draftees were sometimes unaware of their final destination until they arrived in Afghanistan. Once bodies started coming home, a wave of hysteria gripped young men and their mothers across the country.

The "Afghantsy" — as the veterans are known in Russian — returned to find a crumbling Soviet Union unconcerned by the ordeals they had suffered for the supposed benefit of the motherland.

Afghantsy formed tight-knit groups across the country. They regularly meet to reminisce and hold concerts, singing deeply moving tunes whose lyrics are sprinkled with Dari phrases. But that is only for each other.

At the small Museum for the Afghanistan War, tucked away on the outskirts of Moscow, school groups have been visiting with increasing frequency. "Interest in the war is growing, especially with the 30-year anniversary coming up," said the museum's director, Igor Yerin.

An Afghan War vet himself, Yerin has spent decades collecting the masses of war memorabilia for the museum, where Soviet rockets and rations of canned beef compete for space with the ragged clothing of mujahideen fighters.

But even for Yerin, the war conjures up conflicting feelings.

"The re-evaluation by the government is not about rehabilitation, but about remembering," he said. "We Russians swing on the soul first, then the brain."

## UK runaway seeks return from Syria

Associated Press

LONDON — A pregnant British teenager who ran away from Britain to join Islamic State extremists in Syria four years ago has said she wants to come back to London, but her path home is not clear.

Shamina Begum told The Times newspaper in a story published Thursday that she is nine months pregnant and worried about the health of her unborn child.

"In the end, I just could not endure anymore," she said, describing the death from illness and malnutrition of her first two children. "Now all I want to do is come home to my family."

The 19-year-old Londoner was found by the newspaper in a refugee camp in northern Syria. She was one of three schoolgirls from the Bethnal Green neighborhood who went to Syria to join ISIS in 2015 at a time when the group's online recruitment program lured a number of teenage girls to its self-proclaimed caliphate.

They went to join a fourth teen from Bethnal Green who had already joined the extremists. Begum told the newspaper all four married Islamic



Begum

State extremists in Syria.

One of the four is believed to have died in an airstrike. Begum says the other two were alive as of two weeks ago.

She told the newspaper she didn't regret joining the group and wasn't troubled the first time she saw the severed head of one of its execution victims — comments that will likely make it more difficult for her to convince authorities she is ready to rejoin civilian society.

U.K. Security Minister Ben Wallace told Sky News it was "worrying" that Begum did not express remorse. He said she would have known what she was getting into when she left London for Syria.

He said the British public would be concerned about someone returning to a country that "they apparently hate" and stressed that "actions have consequences."

It is possible she could face criminal charges if she returns to Britain.



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# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Purse lost in 1950s to be reunited with owner

**IN** JEFFERSONVILLE — A purse containing a prom invitation, photos and other items from 1950s America will be returned to its owner, now 82, after workers found it while demolishing part of an Indiana school.

Martha Everett lost the black, stitched purse more than six decades ago. Workers found it in January behind science classroom cabinets in the old Jeffersonville High School, where Everett was a senior in 1953.

Greater Clark County Schools spokeswoman Erin Bojorquez said the district was able to track Everett after one of her relatives saw a Facebook post about the purse. The district plans to mail the purse to Everett's home in Florida.

## Police: Murder plot foiled just in time

**TN** HUMBOLDT — Police said they were able to foil a murder-for-hire plot hours before the killing was to take place.

A statement from the West Tennessee Drug Task Force said agents received information Feb. 6 that Stephen Taylor, 43, of Murfreesboro, had hired Gregory Barnes, 22, to kill a Murfreesboro man who was a potential witness against Taylor in Rutherford County Circuit Court on Feb. 8.

Agents took the intended victim into protective custody, then arrested Taylor and Barnes. Both are charged with conspiracy to commit first-degree murder.

Investigators said Taylor and Barnes came up with the plot while serving a weekend sentence at the Gibson County jail.

## Town rethinks teen trick-or-treat penalty

**VA** CHESAPEAKE — A city's sneaky appeal of jail time for teenage trick-or-treaters has scared up ridicule and a possible policy change.

The Chesapeake City Council discussed an amendment Tuesday to a 50-year-old law that threatens teens with up to six months in jail if they go door-to-door in pursuit of candy on Oct. 31. The Virginian-Pilot reported no teens have ever been arrested under the ordinance. But it made news last Halloween when it was parodied on "Jimmy Kimmel Live!"

The amendment would eliminate the jail penalty. Trick-or-treating past the age of 12 would carry fines of up to \$250, as would violating an 8 p.m. curfew.

## Police: Man in funeral crash charged with DUI

**GA** LILBURN — A hearse was struck and flipped several times during a funeral procession in metro Atlanta. Police said the man who hit it is charged with DUI and drug and traffic offenses.

News outlets cite a Lilburn police report as saying Troy Hickey is accused of ignoring officers stopping traffic and slamming

## THE CENSUS

**\$786**

The cost of a replica Wyatt Earp pistol that is among items a former Missouri sheriff is reported to have purchased using an unauthorized fund. State Auditor Nicole Galloway on Monday released results of a Gasconade County audit that found former Sheriff Randy Esphorst maintained an unauthorized fund and used it to buy groceries, provide bonuses in violation of the state constitution and make other questionable payments. Esphorst told auditors he didn't buy the gun and knew nothing about it. Sheriff John Romanus said he is implementing recommended changes.



MATT ROURKE/AP

## A doubly wet winter

A pedestrian holding an umbrella is reflected in a window as she passes City Hall in Philadelphia during a winter storm Tuesday.

into the hearse Feb. 8. Two funeral directors inside were taken to a hospital.

Police said Hickey told an officer he used methadone, a synthetic opioid, three weeks earlier. But the officer said "fresh track marks" or injection wounds were on his arms.



## Police: Pot smokers found tiger in house

**TX** HOUSTON — Houston police said some people who went into an abandoned home to smoke marijuana found a caged tiger.

They called police on Monday

and the major offender animal cruelty unit and animal shelter volunteers arrived on the scene.

Officials told KHOU-TV the tiger was well-fed, but the cage was secured by only a nylon strap and a screwdriver. Officials said it could easily open and the tiger could have gone on a "rampage."

The tiger, shown above, was taken to an undisclosed animal sanctuary in Texas.

## Handyman accused of blowing up rowhome

**CO** DENVER — A handyman involved in an argument with tenants intentionally caused an explosion that leveled a brick row house in Denver, injuring nine people including himself, authorities allege.

Todd Perkins, 56, was arrested Monday on suspicion of arson and attempted murder, said Capt. Greg Pixley, a spokesman for the Denver Fire Department.

Perkins, who lived in a camper on the property near downtown Denver, sparked the Aug. 14 explosion that destroyed the six-unit complex, Pixley said.

## Police: Man with 3 wives is in custody

**OH** COLUMBUS — A Maine man who is accused of being married to three different women in three states is behind bars in Ohio.

A warrant was issued when Michael Middleton, 43, missed a court appearance last Thursday in New Hampshire. A day later, he was arrested in Ohio.

Charges were brought in New Hampshire because Middleton married a woman there while also being married to women in Alabama and Georgia.

The New Hampshire wife said Middleton scammed her out of \$20,000.

## Library book 70 years overdue is returned

**MD** SILVER SPRING — A library book more than 70 years overdue has found its way home to a library in Silver Spring.

News outlets reported Mora Gregg, 75, was cleaning her

apartment in Toronto, Canada, last month when she discovered "The Postman," a children's book about the journey of a girl's letter. Stamped inside the yellowed book are the words, "Property of Silver Spring Library."

Gregg said her mother likely checked it out for her when she was a toddler. Gregg sent the book and an apology letter to the library.

## \$4K found inside book donated for charity

**AZ** PHOENIX — Thousands of dollars found inside a donated book have been returned to the former owner.

KPNX-TV reported that volunteer Cathy McAllister was sorting books for a charity book sale in Phoenix when she found \$4,000 in a chamber cut inside "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire."

McAllister said the former owner also left a letter and an address label inside the book. The man's family was contacted and the money returned.

From wire reports



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## BUSINESS/WEATHER

# Airbus discontinuing iconic A380 due to lack of clients

BY ANGELA CHARLTON  
AND JON GAMBRELL  
Associated Press

TOULOUSE, France — European plane maker Airbus said Thursday it will stop making its superjumbo A380 in 2021 for lack of customers, abandoning the world's biggest passenger jet and one of the aviation industry's most ambitious and most troubled endeavors.

Barely a decade after the double-deck, 500-plus-seat plane started carrying passengers, Airbus said that key client Emirates is cutting back its orders, and as a result, "we have no substantial A380 backlog and hence no basis to sustain production."

The decision could affect up to 3,500 jobs and already cost plane makers about \$523 million in losses in 2018, Airbus said.

The company, a European economic powerhouse, is also girding for serious disruption to its cross-continental manufacturing from a likely chaotic British exit from the European Union next month. However, Airbus CEO Tom Enders said Thursday, "We

are getting signals that make me a little more optimistic that we'll see a more orderly Brexit."

The end of the young yet iconic jet is a boon for rival Boeing and an embarrassing symbolic blow for Airbus. A pall of mourning hung in the atmosphere Thursday at its headquarters in the southern French city of Toulouse — but there was also a hint of relief after years of straining to keep the A380 alive.

"It's a painful decision for us," Enders said. "We've invested a lot of effort, a lot of resources, a lot of sweat ... but we need to be realistic."

It's also bad news for Emirates, which has the A380 as the backbone of its fleet, based out of Dubai, the world's busiest airport for international travel.

When it started taking on passengers in 2008, the A380 was hailed for its roominess, large windows, high ceilings and quieter engines. Some carriers put in showers, lounges, duty-free shops and bars on both decks.

Airbus had hoped the A380 would squeeze out Boeing's 747

and revolutionize air travel as more people take to the skies.

Instead, airlines have been cautious about committing to the costly plane, so huge that airports had to build new runways and modify terminals to accommodate it. The double-decker planes started flying in 2008.

The A380 had troubles from the start, including tensions between Airbus' French and German management and protracted production delays and cost overruns. Those prompted a company restructuring that cost thousands of jobs.

Among early detractors of the A380 was analyst Richard Abouaf, of Washington-based Tetl Group, who said its demise "was inevitable."

"But thanks to the strength of the market right now, and the strength of Airbus' other products, the damage will not have a huge impact on the industry," he told The Associated Press. "For Boeing, it has been a very long time since they needed to worry about the A380 as a competitive factor."

## Germany barely avoids a recession with zero growth

By DAVID MCHUGH  
Associated Press

FRANKFURT, Germany — Germany recorded zero growth in the fourth quarter, narrowly avoiding a recession and adding to doubt signs piling up about the 19-country eurozone economy.

The lackluster figure released Thursday was lower than the 0.1 percent expected by market analysts and followed a 0.2 percent fall in output during the preceding third quarter.

Business spending on machinery and equipment as well as construction supported the economy in the fourth quarter and prevented Germany from suffering two straight quarters of negative growth, one definition of a recession. Exports and imports increased at nearly the same rate, meaning no positive contribution to fourth-quarter growth statistics.

Slowing global trade amid U.S.-China trade tensions has been holding back Germany's export-focused economy. Growth last year was also hit by troubles in the auto industry when automakers had difficulty getting new cars certified under new emissions tests, and by low water on

the Rhine River that interrupted commerce. The slowdown led the European Commission last week to cut its growth forecast for Germany for this year to 1.1 percent from 1.8 percent.

The weak second half followed a stronger performance in the first six months, leaving growth for all of 2018 at 1.5 percent. For the fourth quarter, the year-on-year growth rate slumped to 0.6 percent, tracing a steady decline from 1.2 percent year-on-year in the third quarter and 2.0 percent in the second.

### EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	
Euro costs (Feb. 15)	\$1.1589
Saudi riyal (Feb. 15)	69.8629
British pound (Feb. 15)	\$1.32
Japanese yen (Feb. 15)	108.00
South Korean won (Feb. 15)	1,097.00
Commercial rates	
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3770
British pound	\$0.7819
Canada (Dollar)	1.3326
China (Yuan)	6.7705
Denmark (Krone)	6.6042
Egypt (Pound)	17.5596
Euro	\$1.1271/0.8873
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8471
Hungary (Forint)	282.69
Israel (Shekel)	3.6547
Japan (Yen)	110.61
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3039
Norway (Krone)	8.6575
Philippines (Peso)	52.35
Poland (Zloty)	3.84
Qatar (Riyal)	3.7514
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3575
South Korea (Won)	1,127.99
Switzerland (Franc)	1.0063
Thailand (Baht)	31.34
Turkey (Lira)	5.3072

(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance. For Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, for nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)

### INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	5.50
Discount rate	3.00
Federal funds market rate	4.40
3-month bill	2.38
30-year bond	3.03

### EUROPE GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel
Germany	\$2.542	\$2.923	\$3.178	\$3.232
Change in price	+2.2 cents	+1.3 cents	+1.7 cents	No change
Netherlands	--	\$3.289	\$3.440	\$3.679
Change in price	--	-3.4 cents	-3.4 cents	-1.6 cents
U.K.	--	\$2.857	\$3.117	\$3.166
Change in price	--	+1.9 cents	+1.7 cents	No change
Azores	--	--	\$3.099	--
Change in price	--	--	+1.7 cents	--
Belgium	--	\$2.614	\$2.832	\$3.137
Change in price	--	No change	No change	No change
Turkey	--	--	\$2.995	\$3.049*
Change in price	--	--	+1.7 cents	No change

### PACIFIC GAS PRICES

Country	Unleaded	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel
Japan	\$2.959	--	\$3.019	--
Change in price	--	+1.0 cents	No change	--
Okhawa	\$2.329	--	\$3.019	--
Change in price	+3.0 cents	--	No change	--
South Korea	\$2.359	--	\$2.999	\$3.049
Change in price	+2.0 cents	--	No change	No change
Guam	\$2.349**	\$2.729	\$2.979	--
Change in price	+2.0 cents	+1.0 cents	--	--

\* Diesel EFD \*\* Midgrade  
For the week of Feb. 15-21

### MARKET WATCH

Feb. 13, 2019

Dow Jones Industrials	117.51
	25,543.27
Nasdaq composite	5.76
	7,420.38
Standard & Poor's 500	8.30
	2,753.03
Russell 2000	4.71
	1,542.94

## WEATHER OUTLOOK

### FRIDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



### FRIDAY IN EUROPE

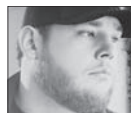


### SATURDAY IN THE PACIFIC



The weather is provided by the American Forces Network Weather Center, 2nd Weather Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.

# WEEKEND



Luke  
Combs  
Music, Page 36

A large, high-contrast black and white close-up of Alita from the movie 'Alita: Battle Angel'. She has dark, long hair and distinctive white markings under her eyes. Her expression is serious and determined.

## EYEING A BIG BREAKTHROUGH

**'ALITA: BATTLE ANGEL' LOOKS TO BRING MANGA LONG-SOUGHT HOLLYWOOD SUCCESS**

Feature on Page 24

Movie review on Page 25

# WEEKEND: GADGETS



DOMINIC VALENTE/The Washington Post

Justin Herbert pushes two carts of Morf Boards, a popular kids toy, through a Walmart in Phoenix. Herbert and his wife estimate they will make about \$150,000 this year by reselling retail items.

## 'Flesh-and-blood robots'

### Resellers raid clearance aisles, make profit online

BY RACHEL SIEGEL  
The Washington Post

With their two young kids in tow, Justin and Kristen Herbert drove to a Target near their home outside Scottsdale, Ariz. It was time to get to work. The Herberts were on the hunt for all of the Contigo water bottles the store had in stock, and kept the camera rolling for their 6,400 YouTube subscribers. Within minutes, an employee pulled out 32 two-packs sold on clearance for \$5 each from a back storage room. For two people who recently left their jobs in finance, the blue-and-black plastic bottles might as well have been made of gold. The Herberts would resell the two-packs on Amazon for \$19.95. Subtracting some taxes and fees, they'd clear \$6.16 in profit. All told, the Herberts' 10-minute Target run earned them \$198.

Justin, 30, and Kristen, 28, estimate they can reel in \$150,000 this year from their newest gig: retail arbitrage. The basic idea is to buy up a bunch of the same item — from water bottles to vacuums to Monopoly boards — and then resell them online for a handsome profit.

For some, this is just a lucrative side hustle — perhaps to climb out of debt or save up for a Disney World vacation. For others, it has become their primary way of earning a living. And beyond that, the Herberts say, this work is helping them build up \$50,000 so they can adopt a child. "If we're showing that you can come up with big money for an adoption," Kristen said, "you can come up with big money to get yourself out of a hole, credit card debt or a house payment."

While the idea to buy something cheap and sell it at a higher price is age-old, the concept of retail arbitrage has emerged in the digital age.

Chris Green wrote one of the go-to-how-to books on the topic, titled "Retail Arbitrage." And he's helped popularize the moniker.

The term seems to be having a moment. In December, according to Google Trends, searches for "retail arbitrage" spiked on YouTube, where aficionados post videos of their shopping and reselling sprees. One reseller, who has more than 52,000 YouTube subscribers, filmed his 22-hour buying binge through 17 Walgreens. He filled his trunk with 182 Monopoly games and flipped most of them in one night for \$2,500.

In the early 2000s, resellers started flipping products on eBay. But Green's guide focused on the engine behind many of these small businesses: Fulfillment By Amazon, or FBA.

Through FBA, people can add their own products to Amazon's vast online catalogue. Sellers package their products and ship them to Amazon warehouses, where they are stored until an order comes in. Amazon takes them from there — pulling an item off the warehouse shelf and getting it to the customer's door.

Green, who's been dubbed the "godfather of retail arbitrage," used to be a sales representative for Bosch Power Tools. He started reselling power tools on eBay in the early 2000s.

Then, with the rise of Android and iPhone apps that can scan products and track down major sales, Green realized retail arbitrage could work for anyone, even those who didn't know the inner workings of an industry.

For Mike "Reezzy Resells" Rezendes, retail arbitrage has been a kind of salvation. Rezendes said he grew up in a troubled household and was married with a child by 16. As a teenager, he noticed commercials for eBay on TV and started selling whatever he could rummage around the house, like his Nintendo and its games and controllers.

Now, Rezendes, 34, has been reselling items online full-time for 14 years. His YouTube channel, "Reezzy Resells," has more than 85,000 subscribers. He runs his company with his best friend from high school and oversees a small team who buy up goods from stores like Nike, Marshalls and Ross.

Last year, the company saw \$800,000 in gross sales for about \$240,000 in profit. In January, he got more than \$8,000 in online ad revenue.

One day last month, Rezendes had more than 100 pairs of Nike shoes in his garage that he planned to ship to Amazon. He was working on a YouTube video breaking down how he bought 100 Nerf guns from Target.com and flipped them for \$1,500.

Rezendes, who lives in Santa Cruz, Calif., said retail arbitrage has kept him from having to fill a 9-to-5 desk job. But he also knows online resellers and small-business owners like him are crucial to Amazon's model. Amazon "needs people like me to fill all the holes in the marketplace," he said. "We're literally flesh-and-blood robots for Amazon."

## GADGET WATCH

### Wireless audio system gives gamers a boost

By GREGG ELLMAN  
Tribune News Service

I'm not a gamer, so I defer to gaming friends when I review something in that category.

After a friend gave the Steel-Series Arctis Pro Wireless gaming audio system a try, I got a two-word reply: "Oh, wow."

He thought it was awesome and had a few of his gaming friends try them. All were in glowing agreement.

The gamers had fun using their PS4 and a PC connected to the Arctis Pro headset and raved about aspects such as wireless connectivity options, comfort, sound, battery life and appearance.

Along with the gaming features, the wireless headphones contain premium 40,000 Hz speaker drivers, which are great by listening-to-music standards alone. Each airwave fabric ear cushion sits on your ear with breathable comfort and has an adjustable elastic headband.

The dual wireless headphones have Bluetooth and 2.4G wireless capabilities, enabling users to listen to gaming audio and chat with others via a mobile device. The connections can be used independently or together. The retractable boom microphone is bidirectional noise canceling. A transmitter base station allows you to adjust the audio, which can also be done from the headset. The base station also lets you answer calls and has an onboard equalizer.

The battery life is great, with up to a combined 20 hours using the swappable dual battery system. This allows one battery to be used while a second charges in about an hour inside a transmitter.

Online: steelseries.com; \$329.99

Jaybird's Tarah wireless sport headphones won't do much for your gaming life, but they would be a great companion for a row, workout or just listening to a playlist.

The category of sport wireless earbuds has grown substantially over the past few years and while many are great, they are also costing a bundle.

The Tarah earbuds have all the features you need and at a reasonable price.

Inside each set of silicone ear gels (multiple sizes are included) is a 6mm driver to deliver solid sound with built-in passive noise isolation. Each ear also has an ear fin, which helps keep the product in place.

The Jaybird app helps you customize the sound and also gives you access to your playlists.

The Bluetooth earbuds have inline controls with an omnidirectional microphone for hands-free calls. With an IPX7 rating, they are sweat- and waterproof and give you six hours of play time before a USB charge is needed.

Online: jaybirdsport.com; \$79.99

The Niteize Orbiter Dash Mount Kit is one of the better handsfree hardware options for easy on/off smartphone dashboard mounting.

A low-profile metal plate sticks to the back of your phone or phone case, which attaches to the Orbiter Magnetic Socket. These give you an easy connection with the neodymium magnet power coming to the dash mount.

The kit includes strong 3M VHB adhesive to hold the mount to your dashboard, which can also be cleanly removed if needed. An adhesive is included for attaching the metal plate to your phone.

Adjusting and rotating your smartphone with the mount is smooth and easy and stays in position well while you're driving. Its thin, high-friction ring is designed to prevent movement.

Online: niteize.com; \$37.49



STEELSERIES/TNS



NITEIZE/TNS

ON THE COVER: "Alita: Battle Angel" is about a cyborg who wakes up in a post-apocalyptic dystopia.

Twentieth Century Fox

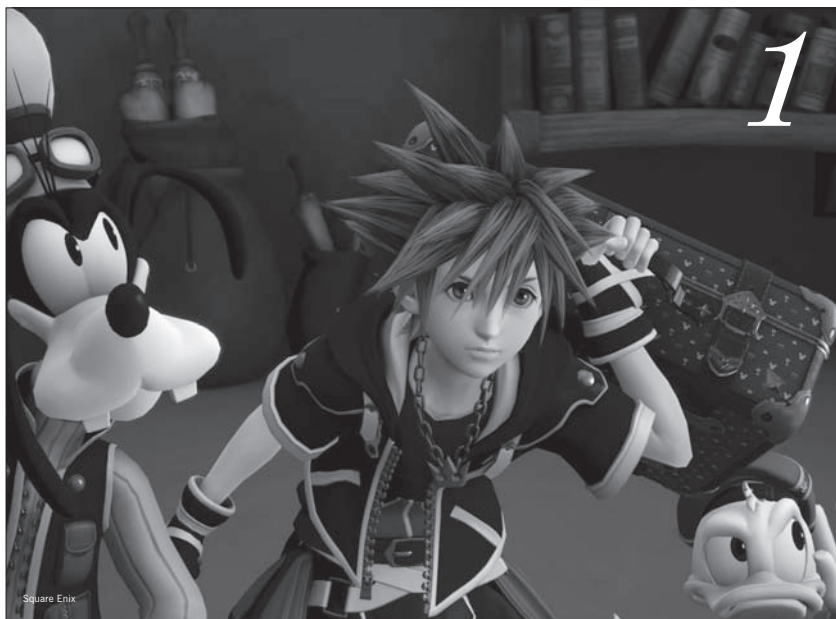
Smartphones will remain securely mounted on the dashboard with the Niteize Orbiter Dash Mount Kit.



## WEEKEND

# CHECK IT OUT

## Events, entertainment and other ways to fill your free time



### 1 Calling all fans of Disney-Pixar

Hear that? That's the rustling of legions of fans of Disney and Pixar properties, settling in to play "Kingdom Hearts 3," the latest mashup of all they hold dear. What's it about? Well ... that part is a little confusing, but essentially, there's a main character, Sora, who's a ... keyblade wielder? He befriends a bunch of adorable, beloved characters, who help him battle against ... some bad guys, who want ... something bad. Along the way, players get to dance with Rapunzel, and make food with Remy from "Ratatouille," and hang out with Woody and Buzz in a toy store, and match vegetables with Winnie the Pooh's friend, Rabbit. Ultimately, it's these moments that should please existing fans and attract new ones.

• Game review on Page 34.

### 2

#### Luke Combs rides hits, sincerity to success

Luke Combs' career has shot from Nashville nobody to superstar seemingly overnight. The country music artist's approach was simple: Work hard, be genuine and make music you'd like to hear played on the radio. Part of his charm is his authenticity; he doesn't try to have a brand, and he doesn't dress fancy. Oh, and those likable hits don't hurt — his "Hurricane," describing the jolt of unexpectedly seeing an ex, sold nearly 15,000 copies in its first week on iTunes. But fame hasn't changed him. He uses his platform to encourage his fans who are working-class, just as he was, to aim high, just like he did.

• Profile of Luke Combs on Page 36.

### 3

#### Prepare for Oscars with 'Bohemian Rhapsody'

The Academy Awards ceremony is getting ever closer. We've got just two weekends left to see Best Picture nominees, so we can nod sagely when the winner is announced, or perhaps express disgust that OUR favorite was overlooked. It's easier as of this week to see one of the frontrunners for best picture and lead actor, "Bohemian Rhapsody," as it's now available on DVD. Rami Malek has been vacuuming up awards all season for his toothy turn as Queen frontman Freddie Mercury, much to the surprise of those who thought Christian Bale's bloated take as Dick Cheney in "Vice" would be the one to beat.

• More new DVD releases on Page 39.

### 4

#### What's for dinner? spaghetti, snowballs

During the recent polar vortex across the midwestern United States, late-night comedy host Jimmy Kimmel asked parents in the affected region to serve their kids spaghetti and snowballs for dinner, and record what happened. "It tastes like a moldy tire," said an unimpressed youngster. (What's in THEIR snow??) One mom told her kids they'd be eating the dish every night while there's still snow outside. The baleful look on her daughter's face is priceless. One extra cruel mom served it as a birthday dinner to her young daughter, who promptly bursts into tears.

• Watch the video at [tinyurl.com/y7vmkusn](http://tinyurl.com/y7vmkusn).

## WEEKEND: MOVIES

# Manga movie MAGIC

Hollywood hoping film adaptation of 'Alita' will be a breakthrough for notoriously tricky genre

By NICK PERRY  
Associated Press

**T**he manga movie "Alita: Battle Angel" has been 20 years in the making, and producer Jon Landau thinks it will finally represent the breakthrough success in Hollywood for a genre which has proved problematic. "I think this is definitely the breakthrough one because of the story that Kishiro wrote," said Landau, referring to Japanese author Yukito Kishiro, who wrote the graphic novels, or manga, upon which the movie is based.

"You know, other mangas that have not worked have been very Asian-centric in their world, and in their stories," Landau said. "And Kishiro wrote a melting-pot world. He didn't write a central character that was Asian. He wrote universal themes of discovery, of self-awareness, for these characters. And that's what's relatable to people across the globe."

The film has an estimated budget of \$200 million and when it opens, Twentieth Century Fox will be hoping for a much better reception than Paramount's 2017 flop "Ghost in the Shell."

That manga movie didn't seem to connect with audiences, grossing just \$41 million in the U.S. and \$170 million worldwide, with some critics accusing it of "whitewashing" after Scarlett Johansson was cast in the lead role.

"Alita" tells the story of cyborg Alita (Rosa Salazar) who awakens

without memory in a dystopic world where she's taken in by a compassionate father figure Dr. Dyson Ido (Christoph Waltz). As she learns to navigate her new world, she begins to discover her latent fighting powers and develops feelings for street-smart Hugo (Keanu Johnson).

Landau said director James Cameron first fell in love with the Alita novels in 1999, and spent five years working on a script that ballooned to nearly 200 pages with 600 pages of

notes. He says Cameron got waylaid working on "Avatar" (2009) and its sequels before one day having a social lunch with director Robert Rodriguez.

"He said if you can crack this down to a shooting length, you can direct it," Landau recalls. "And Robert did."

During principal filming in Austin, Texas, Salazar wore a motion-capture suit so her character could later be animated to reflect its look in the novels. When the first trailers came out last year, some viewers said Alita's eyes appeared huge to the point of being creepy.

Senior visual effects supervisor Joe Letteri, from the Weta Digital studio in New Zealand's capital Wellington, said they discussed the eyes with Cameron, and he had the opposite reaction, telling them they had held back and should go bigger. "And it wasn't the size of the eyes, it was the size of the pupils," Letteri said. "Because that was a quality in the book, that sort of doll-like quality, and he thought we should bring that out more. And it worked."

Salazar, who previously appeared in "Maze Runner: The Scorch Trials" (2015), said she completed many months of martial arts training in disciplines like Muay Thai to prepare for the fight sequences.

"It was a lot of working through soreness, working through pain, getting my endurance up," she said.

She broke some ribs during her training, she said.

"I fell on my ribs doing a whip kick," she said. "My other foot just kind of gave out, my other leg kind of swept from under me, and I fell directly on my ribs. I couldn't breathe for a little while."

She said she always trusted her character would look good on the screen after Rodriguez showed her some concept art before she got the role.

"They had a vision," she said. "They stuck to that vision. I trust their vision. And then that is what we ended up with."

She said she can empathize with the way Alita transforms from a girl to a woman in the movie, after shedding one body for another. "I could relate to that when I was 14 and I felt like a mutant," she said.

Waltz, who played Col. Hans Landau in "Inglourious Basterds," said he had no experience with graphic novels before reading up on Alita.

"The manga, comic, graphic novel thing is not my world at all," he said. "I know nothing about it. And I realize that there is a vast field to be discovered."



Photos courtesy of Twentieth Century Fox

Based on the 1990 manga series created by Yukito Kishiro, "Alita: Battle Angel" is a collaboration between director Robert Rodriguez, right, and producer James Cameron 20 years in the making.

## WEEKEND: MOVIES



# ‘Alita: Battle Angel’: Big eyes, big effects

BY MARK KENNEDY  
Associated Press

**A**lita is just like a typical teenage girl. She loves chocolate, breaks curfew and crushes on a bad boy with floppy hair, a leather jacket and a motorcycle. But Alita isn't typical in other ways. For one, she can slice apart a single falling tear with her ferocious battle sword.

Those are the two sides brought up in “Alita: Battle Angel,” our film entry into the thrilling manga world of artist Yukito Kishiro and imagined for the screen by producer James Cameron and director Robert Rodriguez. The film crams in so many plot lines that it risks being overstuffed but somehow stays true to its mesmerizing vision and emerges as a sci-fi success, if not a triumph.

Alita is both machine and human and the big-budget screen adaptation is both live action and computer generated, each element present in Alita herself, played with equal parts tenderness and ferocity by Rosa Salazar. She's been given huge CG eyes, but they're not as distracting as you might fear. Somehow, Salazar still conveys deep emotion without a crucial acting tool. The film also has appearances by Jennifer Connelly, who is chilly and mysterious, and Mahershala Ali, who is chilly and dangerous.

The film begins with Alita's torso found in a junk heap by a compassionate cyber-physician played by Christoph Waltz. The year is 2563, and we are in the crowded, chaotic streets of Iron City, a melting pot of survivors from a post-apocalyptic war. Cyborgs are everywhere, and getting fresh parts seems to fuel the economy.

Alita's human core is given a body and she awakens, but has no memory of what came before. She must find out who she is and what her destiny is. “Whose rules do I live by?” she asks. Meanwhile, she falls for a human cyborg jacker (bland but hunky Keanon Johnson) who has some moral issues to work out since he's romancing a cyborg by day and slicing them apart at night.

There are several subplots involving cyberpunk bounty hunters, a ruling elite that lives in the sky and the town's favorite sport — Motorball, a combination fuel-fueled roller derby and Death Race. The film is rated PG-13 but there's quite a bit of cyber-gore here, including gouging out eyeballs (more than once) and slicing metal folk in half or amputating them. If these were human, we'd be moving toward an R for sure.

The filmmakers are not afraid of making our



20th Century Fox

**A young female cyborg (Rosa Salazar) fights to unlock the secrets of her past in ‘Alita: Battle Angel,’ co-starring Christoph Waltz, Jennifer Connelly, Keanon Johnson and Mahershala Ali.**

heroine absolutely lethal and yet swooningly immature (she actually digs into her chest and offers her own artificial beating heart to her boyfriend, later laughingly admitting that gesture was “intense.”) She can give a beat-down to a roomful of hardened killers but still curl up on the couch and put her head on her adoptive dad's chest. She can do flips worthy of an Olympic gymnast but her dad still wants her to wear knee pads and a helmet while competing at Motorball — against lasers, huge spinning saws and knives.

Alita has a strong moral compass — “I do not stand by in the presence of evil,” she announces — and, thankfully, triggering her special brand of martial arts mayhem must be earned. When a cute dog is senselessly slaughtered (relax, off camera), she dabs its blood on her face out of respect and revenge, squints really hard and coils up like a lethal spring. It's very clear that whoever did that will not survive the next five minutes.

“Alita: Battle Angel,” which, in the end, needs more humor and less violence, kind of staggers quietly to its end. A sequel isn't just hinted at — it's practically dangled in front of our eyes as Alita looks heavenward to the next battlefield in the sky city. Well, count us in. Like Lailee Steinfeld in “Bumblebee,” Salazar's Alita is part of a welcome wave of films about complex young women who know how to handle even the worst machines. Girls rule.

—It's practically dangled in front of our eyes as Alita looks heavenward to the next battlefield in the sky city. Well, count us in. Like Lailee Steinfeld in “Bumblebee,” Salazar's Alita is part of a welcome wave of films about complex young women who know how to handle even the worst machines. Girls rule.

“Alita: Battle Angel” is rated PG-13 for sequences of sci-fi violence and action, and for some language. Running time: 122 minutes.



Universal Pictures

**“Happy Death Day 2U” is the sequel to the 2017 film about a college student reliving the day of her own murder. Starring Jessica Rothe.**

## ‘Happy Death Day 2U’ goes back to the future

BY KIMBER MYERS  
Los Angeles Times

While the first “Happy Death Day” was a delightful surprise — full of heart and ingenuity, if lacking in gore — its sequel feels like nearly as much of a revelation. That shock isn't because of its horror movie elements like jump scares and multiple murders; it's because unlike its predecessor it isn't even primarily a horror movie. “Happy Death Day 2U” still trades in the trappings of genre, but slides the franchise sideways into science fiction.

By nature, the sequel should find it easy to re-create what we liked about the original because of the time loop that Tree (Jessica Rothe) was caught in in the first movie. But the real feat of “Happy Death Day 2U” is its refusal to take that easier route while still pleasing fans of the first one. Instead of Tree's now-familiar routine, this movie begins with the roommate of Tree's boyfriend, Carter (Israel Broussard), Ryan (Phi Vu) — now stuck in a loop of his own and repeatedly dying like Tree was in the first film.

Now, Tree, Carter, Ryan and two of Ryan's fellow quantum mechanics students (Suraj Sharma and Sarah Yarkin) have to figure out how to get things back to normal using the same science that broke time in the first place. They're fighting against time, a new killer and an angry Dean Bronson (the always welcome Steve Zissis) to find the solution.

The idea that Tree's predicament is based in science swiches things up a bit and allows returning director Christopher Landon — and the audience — to have a different kind of fun. It's gleefully geekier this go-round, from a prominently featured Nikola Tesla bobblehead to an always-in-progress game of “Settlers of Catan.”

The previous film called itself out as the spiritual successor to “Groundhog Day,” and its

sequel acknowledges its debt to the “Back to the Future” trilogy at every turn. Bear McCreary's score nods to Alan Silvestri's classic compositions, and there's an enviably cool Mondo “Back to the Future” poster on the wall. Even “The Power of Love” makes an appearance here, but instead of a song by Huey Lewis and the News, this time it's the message of “Happy Death Day 2U” itself.

What sets “Happy Death Day” and its follow-up apart from similar genre fare is that emphasis on love, as well as kindness and being a better person. They're remarkably sincere for movies that feature literally dozens of deaths, a number of which are played for laughs. “Happy Death Day 2U” retains its predecessor's simultaneously gonzo and PG-13 approach to violence, offering death after death but never really showing much. An early shot of Ryan picking his nose is probably the goriest bit we get here.

That tone generally works, not just thanks to Landon's direction, but also largely because of Rothe. She's one of the most magnetic new actresses on screen, equally capable of showing vulnerability and pain as well as a blithe, easy joy. Returning to the loop unites Tree, and it's a blast to watch Rothe's character freak out, particularly when everyone around her is confused. The script from Landon would do better to develop more of the expanded list of characters, but it's hard to blame him for wanting to focus on the film's biggest strength.

Like most sequels, “Happy Death Day 2U” can't quite replicate the feelings of joy and discovery of the original, but Landon deserves credit for varying the tune, while still playing the hits that will please the fans of its predecessor.

“Happy Death Day 2U” is rated PG-13 for violence, language, sexual material and thematic elements. Running time: 100 minutes.



## WEEKEND: MOVIES

## Devine comedy

‘Isn’t It Romantic’ star on his love for rom-coms, reuniting with ‘Pitch Perfect’ co-star Rebel Wilson

By JOSEPH V. AMODIO  
Newsday

**A**s actor and comedian Adam Devine knows, there’s nothing like a conk on the head—or, in his case, getting hit by a cement truck (for real)—to change your outlook on life.

So, for him, the premise of the new Rebel Wilson film, “Isn’t It Romantic,” isn’t that far-fetched. The comedy stars Wilson as Natalie, a New York City architect (and cynic about love) who is knocked unconscious and awakens to discover—gasp—her life has become a romantic comedy, full of all the stereotypical elements of rom-coms (the oversized apartment, gay sidekick, impromptu musical numbers—you know the drill). Devine, who co-starred with Wilson in two “Pitch Perfect” films, plays her office buddy and possible love interest, Josh, alongside Liam Hemsworth as a hunky businessman and Priyanka Chopra as a model.

Devine, 35, recently spoke with Newsday.

**Newsday: So when it comes to romantic comedies, are you for or against?**

**Devine:** I’m “for.” I get very misty. I like a good romance. I like to root for the underdog. So I’m all for a good rom-com. It’s stuff you wish would happen to you. Why can’t I have a meet-cute? I only have meet-disgustings.

**What’s it like getting to sing with Rebel again?**

Rebel and I have such a history with those “Pitch Perfect” movies, so I’ve clicked back into it. And Priyanka—she’s such a pro, with her Bollywood background. It was really fun watching Liam because he hadn’t had much experience doing that. Watching Liam be goofy, since he’s the coolest guy on earth, was really awesome.

**I hear you gave Rebel one of her first U.S. gigs — a guest spot on Comedy Central series, “Workaholics,” in 2011.**

I knew from the get-go Rebel was super-funny. Then he did “Pitch Perfect.” Now this. It seems she’s Tina Fey to my Amy Poehler. Or the other way around.

**So about that cement truck, when you were 11 — are you sick of people asking about it?**

No. It’s my sympathy card. I was walking. My friends were across the street. We were going to a convenience store to get candy. My friend yells, “Come on,” and I took it as the coast was clear. He meant, “C’mon, I’m excited to get candy.” I couldn’t see that side of the street, walked out and got hit by a cement truck. I was in a coma for two weeks and couldn’t walk for almost two years. I had to relearn how to walk.

**That kind of experience must have a lasting impact. How has it shaped you as an adult?**

My legs hurt more than they would.

**They hurt?**

Oh, yeah. They’re always hurting a bit. But I think I don’t take things for granted like I probably would. I have goals I work hard to achieve, because I know how precious time is. When you get that close to dying at an early age, you realize, oh, I could just walk in front of a truck tomorrow and I’m gone. I might as well try to do all the stuff I want to do as quickly as I can. At least that’s how I look at it.

**You’re now shooting a film about a guy obsessed with his cellphone. Which begs the question: How obsessed are you with yours?**

I didn’t really notice it till I got that Apple update saying how often I use my phone. And I’m like ... my God, I’m a monster. You use it for GPS, to watch movies or TV, for Instagram, to tweet. As much as I didn’t think I’m addicted to my phone, I am. And other people are more addicted. So I think the movie is pretty timely. And it’s really funny.

**So if you had to give up one major function or app on your phone, what would it be?**

I’d most like to give up social media. It just takes up so much time. And at the end of the day, I think your life is better without checking in on what other people comment on your life. But I need it for work—you have to post about things. So I’d probably give up ... maybe my camera. I’d like to live in the moment more and not take photos all the time. If I want to take a photo, I should just bring a camera.



Warner Bros. Pictures

In “Isn’t It Romantic,” Adam Devine stars as Josh, the earnest best friend to Rebel Wilson’s character, Natalie.

# ‘Isn’t It Romantic’ is the perfect Galentine’s Day pick

By KATIE WALSH  
Tribune News Service

**I**f 2018 was the year that resurrected the romantic comedy, it was only a matter of time before the beloved genre was parodied by those who know it best. “Set It Up” writer Katie Silberman has teamed up with “How to Be Single” writer Dana Fox and co-writer Erin Cardillo for this twist on the rom-com, “Isn’t It Romantic,” directed by Todd Strauss-Schulson and starring Rebel Wilson. Forget Valentine’s Day, this is the perfect movie for celebrating Galentine’s Day.

Three makes a trend, and “Isn’t It Romantic” does fall into the rather unfortunate high concept subgenre we could call “the head injury attitude adjustment” (see also: “I Feel Pretty” and “What Men Want”). Natalie (Wilson) is a New York architect whose life is far from glam, and whose defensive attitudes about romance and rom-coms are nihilist at best. Her assistant, Whitney (Betty Gilpin), suggests



Warner Bros. Pictures

**A cynical woman (Rebel Wilson, left) gets knocked unconscious and magically wakes up to find herself in an alternate universe in “Isn’t It Romantic,” co-starring Liam Hemsworth, right.**

she might try to be more open to opportunity and take a bit of inspiration from the films she so reviles. This leads to some subversive eye contact that could either result in a mugging or a meet-cute. In Natalie’s grimy, dangerous world, it’s a mugging.

Thanks to her resultant head injury, Natalie wakes up in a rom-com. The streets are picturesque and spotless; dashing real estate investor Blake (Liam Hemsworth) takes an instant shine to her. Natalie keeps tripping—adorably—and every time she

swears, some random ambient noise blares it out. Her grouchy neighbor Donny (Brandon Scott Jones) becomes her gay best friend and makeover montage maven. And her best friend, Josh (Adam Devine), even happens upon a gorgeous model/yoga ambassador, Isabella (Priyanka Chopra), who instantly falls for him. For Natalie, this overly shiny and beautiful world of huge New York apartments and dream dates is pure hell, but she realizes the only way out is through—she’s got to love and be loved.

“Isn’t It Romantic” walks the line between subversive and sendup. It gleefully makes fun of the well-known tropes of romantic comedies, while also satisfying our desire to delight in said tropes. While Natalie joshes and jokes, needles and nudges at the stereotypes, the film still offers up The Kiss, The Musical Number, The Slow-Motion Run to Stop a Wedding the audience craves. This makes it feel a bit defanged—the film could have gone deeper to really unearth some of the more problematic issues of the

genre. “Isn’t It Romantic” tackles the representation of gay men, and the problematic idea that women in the workplace are often enemies in these movies. But it doesn’t get at some of the more problematic and frankly creepy behavior by leading men that’s been normalized in rom-coms. The two male leads are harmless here, but there are some missed opportunities to really deconstruct the genre.

However, what’s positively refreshing and radical about “Isn’t It Romantic” is when Natalie finally decides who to love, it’s not one man or the other, but herself. It’s a simple but revolutionary notion within a world that wants to profit off our insecurities, fears and anxieties. It takes an overdose on rom-com sappiness for Natalie to see the solution that’s been in front of her all along. And hopefully, for the audience, it won’t take a blow to the head to embrace the idea too.

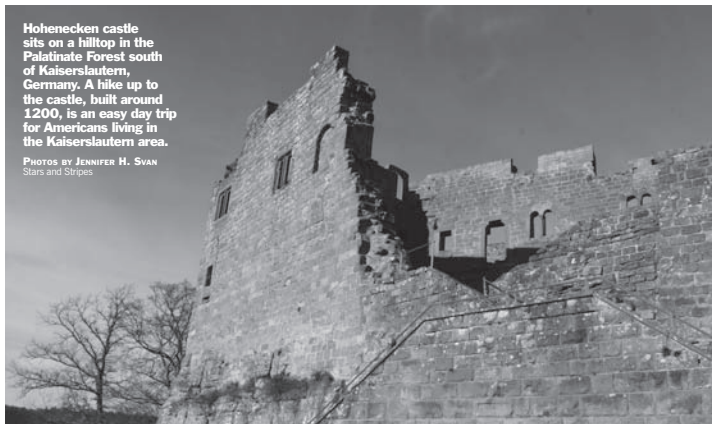
“Isn’t It Romantic” is rated PG-13 for language, some sexual material and a brief drug reference. Running time: 88 minutes.

## WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

## Europe

Hohenecken castle sits on a hilltop in the Palatinate Forest south of Kaiserslautern, Germany. A hike up to the castle, built around 1200, is an easy day trip for Americans living in the Kaiserslautern area.

PHOTOS BY JENNIFER H. SVAN  
Stars and Stripes



# A GERMAN GEM

Kaiserslautern castle ruin of Hohenecken at the edge of the Palatinate Forest has much to explore and enjoy

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN  
Stars and Stripes

What Kaiserslautern lacks in culture it makes up for in history and nature.

The city to the south is blanketed by the Palatinate Forest, Germany's largest contiguous patch of trees. Follow the network of trails and you're bound to come across castle ruins, remnants of the Pfalz chain of castles built in the region during the Middle Ages to buttress the Holy Roman Empire's western border with France.

One of the more prominent such ruins in the Kaiserslautern area is Hohenecken Castle. Built out of local red sandstone on a steep hilltop, the castle overlooks Hohenecken village and can be seen peeking above the trees by drivers heading south of Vogelweh on the B270.



I felt someone may have been watching me during a hike in the woods behind Hohenecken castle.



Goats nap on a southern-facing hillside near Hohenecken castle. Local authorities are cutting down trees near the castle and allowing goats to graze to make the area more of a meadow with a variety of flowers and grasses.



A wooden sign points the way to Hohenecken castle as well as other destinations along the Palatinate Forest's network of hiking trails.

For Americans living in Kaiserslautern, the castle is pretty much in your backyard and as such, it's easy to take for granted. But it should be on everyone's list of local day trips to do while stationed here.

I ventured up there on a recent February day, confirming that on the right day, not much can beat a winter hike in this area.

This was a rare gem of a day, with a clear, Wyoming-blue sky and the air crisp in the shade but warm in the sun.

The castle ruins are easy to get to but do require some legwork. Parking by the cemetery, I hoofed it past the quaint Rochus Chapel on a steep trail up into the trees. In less than 15 minutes, the trail opened up to a plateau on which was perched the Hohenecken castle ruins. As with many ruins, there's mostly just partial walls and hollowed-out rooms left, but enough remains to light one's imagination with images of what life on this hilltop might have been like in the age of nobles, knights and peasants.

The castle was built around 1200 to protect the red-bearded Frederick I Barbarossa von Hohenstaufen's imperial place in Kaiserslautern. Three hundred years later, rebellious farmers seized and occupied the castle, which was later partially destroyed by French troops.

The castle is later part of an ongoing nationwide project in Germany to restore and protect significant cultural sites, a reflection of its importance to the history of the area.

The grounds appear to be well-kept and picnic tables and benches offer a place to linger a bit longer while enjoying sweeping views of the surrounding countryside.

A visit to the castle, however, need not be the end of one's journey. If you're feeling adventurous, take off on the trails that extend into the forest behind the battlements. The trails are well marked and you can walk to Dansenberg, the Bremerhof and beyond, making the day as vigorous and as long as you'd like while taking advantage of the ample hiking opportunities in the Kaiserslautern area.

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## ON THE QT

### DIRECTIONS

From Kaiserslautern and Ramstein, take the B270 south toward Pirmasens. Hohenecken is the first village after Vogelweh. Follow signs for the school, cemetery, church or the Burgschänke hotel and restaurant. Parking is available near the cemetery and church. Follow the path that leads behind the Catholic church, climbing uphill to the castle.

### COSTS

Free

### FOOD

Burgschänke is a good place to grab a bite to eat for lunch or dinner. It's open seven days a week.

### INFORMATION

More information on the castle can be found on the city of Kaiserslautern's website, at: [kaiserslautern.de/start/index.html](http://kaiserslautern.de/start/index.html)

— Jennifer H. Svan

# WEEKEND: TRAVEL

# Europe

# A tale of two castles in Germany, Austria

**T**hough tucked in the hinterlands of Bavaria's far south, the turreted fantasy castle of Neuschwanstein is a secret. But the relatively unknown Ehrenberg ruins, perched on a hill just over the border in Austria, are equally fascinating: While postcard-worthy Neuschwanstein represents the medieval-castle dream, Ehrenberg is the real deal. I first visited both these castles as a teenager, and decades later I'm still enthralled by the contrast between the two — so close, but offering worlds-apart experiences.

Neuschwanstein, the ultimate fairy-tale castle, seems to be on every tourist's list. In the foothills of the Alps, about two hours by car or train from Munich, it's the most lavish of three extravagant castles belonging to Ludwig II, who ruled Bavaria for 22 years until his death in 1886.

Rather than deal with politics in Munich, Ludwig retreated to the countryside. He lived at his family's hunting palace, Hohenschwangau (another impressive castle worth visiting), while devoting himself to Neuschwanstein's construction nearby. Although Ludwig spent 17 years building Neuschwanstein, he lived in it only 172 days. Soon after he moved in, Ludwig was declared mentally unfit to rule Bavaria. Days later, he was found dead in a lake (it's still debated whether he was murdered or committed suicide).

Ludwig was a true romantic living in a Romantic age. His best friends were artists, poets and composers — most notably, his good friend Richard Wagner. Longing for the natural beauty and emotion of an earlier time, he built his medieval fantasy on a hilltop not for defensive reasons, but because he liked the view. His palace is wallpapered with misty medieval themes — brave knights, fair maidens and scenes from Wagnerian operas. But even as he strove to evoke medieval grandeur, he embraced Industrial Age technology. Neuschwanstein — only about as old as

the Eiffel Tower — had electricity, running water and a telephone.

To visit the castle, travelers must buy tickets for the 30-minute guided tour. Advance reservations are practically a must, especially in summer. A highlight of the tour is Ludwig's extravagant throne room,



Rick Steves

based on the plan of a Byzantine church. A one-ton chandelier in the shape of a Byzantine crown hangs above the exquisite mosaic floor consisting of two million stones — a visual encyclopedia of animals and plant life. Another

memorable stop is the king's Neo-Gothic bedroom, featuring an elaborately carved canopy bed topped with a forest of Gothic church spires, "Tristan and Isolde" wall paintings and a personal chapel. A great complement to the crowds and commercialism of Neuschwanstein is a hike up to the stark and brooding ruins of the Ehrenberg Castle ensemble, above the Tirolean town of Reutte, just a half hour's drive over the border. Ehrenberg is an especially fine example of the countless castle ruins rotting away on hilltops all over Europe. It offers lots of medieval wonder to anyone hardy enough to hike up to the top where, amid sword ferns and broken ramparts, you're practically alone in your own private castle ruins in the Austrian Alps.

In Roman times, the Via Claudia — the road below Ehrenberg — was the main route between Italy and Germany. About 10,000 tons of precious salt passed through this valley each year, so locals built this complex of fortresses and castles to control traffic and levy tolls. The complex consists of four parts from different periods: the old toll buildings on



TRISH FEASTER/Ricksteves.com

**At the Ehrenberg Castle ensemble in Austria, a suspension bridge lets adventurous travelers wobble 300 feet above what was once a major ancient Roman trade route.**

the valley floor, the 13th-century Ehrenberg Castle, on the hilltop above the valley; Schlosskopf, a mightier 18th-century castle on a higher peak; and Fort Claudia, a smaller fortification across the valley.

Today, hiking paths wind through the Ehrenberg Castle ruins, signs help orient visitors and a recently built 1,300-foot-long pedestrian bridge hangs more than 300 feet above the valley floor, connecting Ehrenberg with Fort Claudia. An interactive, kid-friendly museum gives visitors the chance to try on a set of armor and lift replica weapons.

Europe's mix of famous must-sees and intimate back-door sights — located within each other's backyards — is, to me, what makes travel here so special.

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CAMERON HEWITT/Ricksteves.com

**It's easy to see why Neuschwanstein Castle, dramatically situated atop a hill in the Bavarian countryside, inspired Disney.**

## TOP TRAVEL PICKS

### Fun, fruits, fragrances at France's Cote d'Azur

If you've been meaning to get down to France's Cote d'Azur, you could do worse than to plan a trip there in the latter half of February, when carnival, fruits and flowers lend an air of celebration to sumptuous surroundings beloved for their mild climate and true-blue seas.

High on the list of priorities should be calling in to Nice, where carnival is celebrated over a two-week period in February. One of the largest events held along the French Riviera attracts more than a million visitors annually. This year's edition kicks off on Feb. 16 and ends with a colorful conclusion on March 2.

Each year's festivities have a theme. This year's "King of Cinema" honors the centennial of the Victorine Studios, a center for the local film industry where Alfred Hitchcock, Woody Allen and other talented directors breathed life into their productions.

Each parade has its own special twist. The Carnival Parade, or Parada Nissarda, takes place on Feb. 24. Hundreds of dancers and musicians lead a parade around the world appear by 18 floats



Karen Bradbury

Read more about things to do in the Europe Traveler blog: [stripes.com/blogs/europe-traveler](http://stripes.com/blogs/europe-traveler)

decorated in keeping with the cinematic theme. The procession follows a loop around the Albertier gardens and key moments are broadcast on a giant screen.

At the Flower Parades, exquisitely styled models standing atop flower-bedecked floats shower the crowds with blooms. With around 80 percent of flowers used in the parades produced locally, this serves as a good introduction to the local flora. These take place Feb. 16, 20, 23 and 27 and March 2.

The Carnival Parades of Lights, the nighttime versions of the parades, feature clever illuminations and a lively sound-

track provided by musical ensembles (Feb. 16, 19, 23 and 26 and March 2).

For a unique experience, turn out for the Loui Queeremal on Feb. 24, a celebration of tolerance and equality for those of all orientations. Online: [loui-queer-naval.fr/billets](http://loui-queer-naval.fr/billets)

For a meaningful look at the proceedings, tickets are essential. The reserved seating zone (generally 26 euros) is one sure way to catch all the action; tickets in the B zone offer good views at roughly half the price or less, but there it's standing room only. Insider advice suggests sitting in a cafe in Old Nice alongside the Promenade de Pailon once the parades have concluded; there, you might catch sight of the floats as they're being returned to the carnival workshop. Online: [en.nicecarnaval.com](http://en.nicecarnaval.com)

In the coastal town of Menton, perched alongside the Italian border, lemons are the object of veneration. From Feb. 16 through March 3, the 86th edition of the Pete du Citron, or Lemon Festival, plays out. Festivities include parades, sculptures made of citrus fruits and illuminations in the gardens.

At the Golden Fruit Parades, confetti flies in the air as brass



Courtesy of nicecarnaval.com

**Models toss blooms from floats to onlookers at the Flower Parades in Nice, France.**

bands, folk ensembles and other entertainers prance and dance between massive floats bedecked with citrus. Parades take place on Feb. 17 and 24, as well as March 3; adult tickets go for 10 euros. Night parades are staged Feb. 21 and 28.

On each festival day, visitors can check out imposing fruit sculptures. This year's theme of Fantastic Worlds is sure to provide plenty of inspiration. Entry to the exhibition site in the

jardins Bioves costs 10 euros. Gardens of Light, held on Feb. 16 and 22 and March 4, offers illuminated fruit displays by night. Online: [fete-du-citron.com](http://fete-du-citron.com)

The last of three good reasons to be in southern France this time of year is sweetly scented. In Mandelieu-la Napoule, the sight of bright yellow mimosas light up the winter from January through March. A native species to Australia, mimosas were introduced to Europe in the mid nineteenth century and thrived in the warm climate of the Cote d'Azur. They played a role in the development of the perfume industry in Grasse, and remain an important factor in the local economy.

From Feb. 20-27, this year's edition of the Mimosa Festival celebrates the adventures of Marco Polo. Festival highlights include a themed water and light show on the beach on Feb. 22, the election of the Queen of Mimosa, followed by a night parade on Feb. 23; and the Grand Corso Fleuri, an over-the-top parade of golden floats, musicians and other entertainers to honor the great explorer on Feb. 24. Other activities include guided hikes and coach tours to perfumeries. Online: [tinyurl.com/y5a4vqv](http://tinyurl.com/y5a4vqv)



## WEEKEND: FOOD &amp; DINING

## Europe



PHOTOS BY SCOTT WYLAND/Stars and Stripes

An antique filing cabinet behind the bar at Evans & Peel Detective Agency is among the furnishings that create a 1940s feel. The London bar is as well disguised as a Prohibition-era speakeasy.

## After Hours: England

By SCOTT WYLAND  
Stars and Stripes

“**E**vans & Peel Detective Agency” is stenciled across an opaque-green door that makes it appear like a real office for private eyes.

The elegant, retro bar in central London is as well-disguised as a Prohibition-era speakeasy, giving casual passersby no clue of what really lies within.

It offers cocktails as creative as its '40s detective motif, decent bar food and vintage furnishings that give it a film-noir ambience. You half expect to hear Humphrey Bogart's voice in a shadowy corner.

And like the speakeasies of old, you can't just enter. I rang the bell and told the man who answered on a speaker that I was there for business. After I was buzzed in, a man wearing suspenders and baggy slacks led me into an office that looked like something from a Raymond Chandler novel. He plopped down behind a scuffed wooden desk that had a manual typewriter and an old-time phone with a black earpiece hanging on a hook. Old sepia photos were tacked to a wall.

“So how are you in need of our service?” he asked with a flat American accent.

“I'm looking for a dangerous woman who won't get me in trouble,” I replied. It seemed like a 1940s thing to say.

He gave me a crooked grin and said, “That's a tall order, but we'll do what we can.”

He motioned me into the bar, which on a slow weekday night was empty except for a couple groups of Americans.

The detective theme is popular with Americans who make up a large part of the clientele that packs the place on weekends, said the suspenders-wearing man, who had abandoned the American accent. Turns out he's Polish.

Among the available drinks are house-crafted cocktails with names befitting the colorful setting, though they're on the pricey side.

There's “Hemingway's breakfast,” a mixture of white rum, grapefruit marmalade and unsalted butter stirred together with a dash of maraschino liqueur for 11 pounds (\$14.25). I had to try the “wobbly journalist,” which blends gin, Seville orange marmalade, sweet and dry vermouths, fresh lemon juice and wormwood liqueur for 10.50 pounds (\$13.60).

Those feeling less adventurous and more frugal can get a glass of wine for 6 to 8 pounds or ale for 4 to 6 pounds a mug.

Anyone who needs food with the drink can order from a short menu that includes sliders, smoked chicken pieces, goat cheese fritters and prawns, priced from 4 to 9 pounds. Whatever you choose will be served by staffers dressed like gun-toting gumshoes and duplicitous dames from 1940s crime thrillers.

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In Evans & Peel's old-time office, above, patrons talk over a case that a detective should investigate before they enter the bar. Right: The front door.

EVANS & PEEL  
DETECTIVE AGENCY

Address: 310c, London SW5 9BA,  
United Kingdom

Hours: 5 p.m. - 11:30 p.m. Monday  
through Thursday; 5 p.m. - midnight  
Friday and Saturday. Closed Sunday  
and Monday.

Parking: streetside

Phone: +44 20 7373 3573

Website: evansandpeel.com

— Scott Wyland

## How to work with chocolate without having a meltdown

By BECKY KRISTAL  
The Washington Post

**C**hocolate. It's everywhere. We know how to enjoy it, but not all of us know how best to work with it in the kitchen.

Chocolate is actually an emulsion, or a suspension of cocoa solids in fat, and that's one of the main reasons cooking with it can be tricky. So you have to take a little care, especially when it comes to heat.

I spoke with Matt Dixon, owner and head chocolate-maker at Washington-based chocolate company Harper Macaw, who shared a few tips on how to get comfortable working with chocolate.

Here's a primer on how you can get the best out of this wonderful ingredient.

**Understanding percentages.** The percentages you see on labels indicate how much of the chocolate came from the cacao bean. The rest can come from milk, sugar or other ingredients. That's why dark chocolates have a higher percentage and milk chocolates have a lower one.

Many factors can contribute to the flavor of the chocolate, and that can even vary among chocolates of the same percentage. Still, generally speaking, you can expect chocolate to be less sweet as the percentage goes up (which is why unsweetened is close or at 100 percent and not usually what you want to eat on its own).

**Melt with care.** Gentle heat is the way to go. “The cocoa solids are really sensitive to heat,” Dixon says. They're not well protected by the fat and other ingredients in chocolate, leaving them particularly vulnerable to scorching. The absolute safest method is to use a double boiler. You don't need anything fancy, merely a heatproof bowl you can set over a saucepan with a few inches of not-yet-boiling water. Make sure the water doesn't touch the bottom of the bowl, or you'll over heat and stir occasionally until the chocolate is fluid.

The microwave is another option. Depending on how much chocolate you're melting, start by microwaving on high for anywhere from 30 to 60 seconds. Stir, scrape down the bowl and continue microwaving in 15- to 20-second bursts, stirring in between. You don't have to wait until the chocolate has completely melted in the microwave. If it looks almost done and you can stir down the rest in the residual heat, you're set.

**Seizing.** This is a risk you run when using a double boiler to melt chocolate, which occurs when liquid is introduced to melted chocolate. As Cook's Illustrated explains it: “When chocolate is melted, its ingredients — mainly cocoa powder, sugar, and cocoa butter — disperse evenly, creating a fluid mass. But if even a tiny amount of moisture is introduced, the liquid and the sugar will form a syrup to which the cocoa par-



STACY ZARIN GOLDBERG  
For The Washington Post

**Chocolate is actually an emulsion, or a suspension of cocoa solids in fat, and that's one of the main reasons cooking with it can be tricky.**

ticles will cling, thereby creating grainy clumps.” You can prevent seizing by not letting liquid get into your melted chocolate, or by melting chocolate from the start with any liquid-containing ingredients a recipe calls for. If it does seize, the solution is counterintuitive: Cook's recommends adding 1 teaspoon of boiling water at a time, stirring vigorously, until it's smooth and fluid. The watered-down chocolate can be used in hot chocolate or chocolate sauce.

**Don't assume you can substitute chocolate chips for chopped chocolate.** Chocolate chips are formulated to help them keep their shape and prevent them from separating when heated. That's great in, say, a chocolate chip cookie. Dixon says you can get away with using chips in baked goods where there are a lot of other things going on. But if you're making a ganache or candy or any other dish where the melted chocolate is a starring ingredient that needs to behave exactly as melted bar chocolate should, skip the chips.

**Chop efficiently.** My default for chopping chocolate is a standard crosshatch pattern, breaking up large bars into pieces and then making my way through them by cutting them one way and then rotating my knife 90 degrees. Food editor Joe Yonan advocates working diagonally through the bar, chipping away at the corner. This automatically gives you smaller pieces, almost shards, that will melt more easily.

**Easy decorating.** If you're a fan of “The Great British Baking Show,” you've probably seen the triumphs and tragedies of trying to decorate with chocolate. The results often hinge on tempering chocolate, which involves melting and cooling chocolate in a specific way so the fat crystals form themselves into the right kind of pattern. Properly tempered chocolate is smooth, shiny and snappy. If you're up for a challenge, go ahead. But if you're not, something most of us home cooks are interested in doing.

That doesn't mean you can't have fun decorating with chocolate. Simply melting chocolate and then drizzling it adds pizzazz to a wide array of desserts. Dixon suggests grating, too, which gives you an elegant dust that can be lightly sprinkled.

## WEEKEND: TRAVEL

## Europe



La Geronstere still spouts sulfurous spring water that is recommended as a treatment for respiratory ailments.

BY SYLVIE BIGAR

Special to The Washington Post

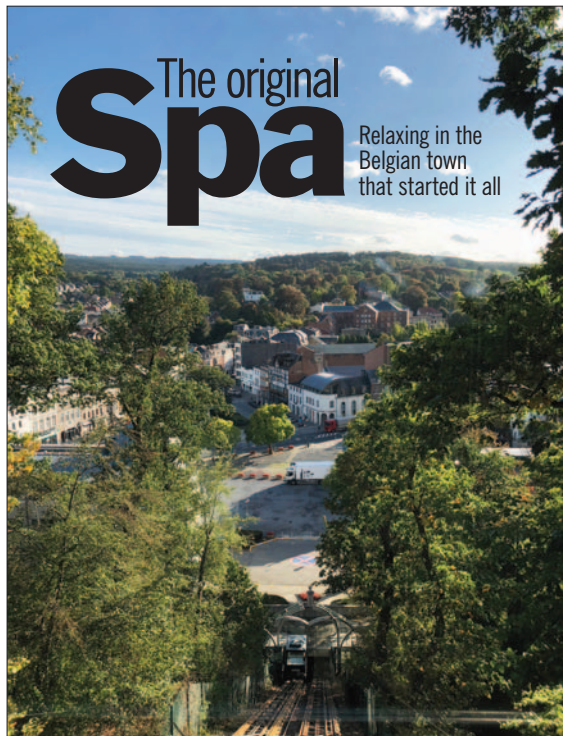
“Thirsty?” asks the flight attendant as she hands me a blue bottle. I twist the cap and sip the crisp, slightly acidic water. One look at the label, Spa Reine, and I wonder if the advertising gods are tracking me. Spa. That’s where I am headed. No, not to the spa — to the Belgian town.

Last year, after several grueling weeks spent juggling teenagers, dogs and deadlines, I sat at my computer, bent on planning a spa break. Instead, I stumbled on that town in Belgium where, I learned, the common noun originated. A few clicks and I was hooked. Last September, I flew to Brussels and took the train for an easy two-hour ride to Spa (population about 10,000), near Liege within the Ardennes forest, to discover where it all started.

Lulled by the rhythm of the train, I admired the late-summer light streaming through the dense, peaceful woods, but I knew that in December 1944, those same trees became the site of one of the fiercest military battles. The Battle of the Bulge, Hitler’s last major offensive against the Allies, claimed about 19,000 American lives in just a few weeks.

“Thousands of soldiers are buried in military cemeteries in the area,” said Gaetan Plein, a guide and raconteur, the next day as we strolled through the quaint town center.

Some say there are 25 springs, while



PHOTOS BY SYLVIE BIGAR/For The Washington Post

A ride on the funicular line to Les Thermes de Spa, the new spa building on the hill, reveals a stunning view of the center of town.

others count as many as 300 sprinkled throughout the rolling hills. Their medicinal properties were already known locally in the 16th century, but when Czar Peter I of Russia (Peter the Great) arrived for a monthlong stay in 1717 at the recommendation of his doctor and left seemingly cured of his liver ailment, he ignited the interest of aristocrats throughout Europe and Russia. Suddenly,

Spa was the place to be.

“At the time,” said Marie-Christine Schils, the curator of the Museum of Spa, “doctors weren’t sure how the water helped but they prescribed it to combat anemia, depression and even infertility.”

Over the next decades, noble gentlemen and ladies, accompanied by their massive entourages, flocked to town to drink the healing waters. A 1734 guidebook of the springs would find its way to Marie Antoinette’s library at Versailles. To accommodate and entertain these travelers, who often stayed for weeks at a time, hotels and boardinghouses sprouted, promenades were constructed and the first casino (which would serve as a recreation center for the First United States Army in 1945) was built.

“Upon returning to England,” Schils said, “English doctors appended the name Spa to local springs with similar properties such as Scarborough Spa,” and that’s how the name became generic.

In the 19th century, Spa was stylish. European artists such as J.M.W. Turner and Gustave Courbet, and writers such as Alexandre Dumas and Victor Hugo, visited. Even the American writer James Fenimore Cooper made the trip, as did the new bourgeois crowd. Bathing in the mineral water became fashionable, and the town reinvented itself as a “thermal city” not only focused on health but also on the new concept of well-being.

“Taking the waters was medicinal, yes,” Schils said, “but it also became social; it was important to see and be seen.”

Walking was part of the regimen recommended by the local doctors in the 18th

CONTINUED ON PAGE 31

## KNOW &amp; GO

## Where to stay

**Radisson Blu Palace Hotel**  
Place Royale 39  
011-328-727-9700  
Online: [radissonblu.com/en/palacehotel-spa](http://radissonblu.com/en/palacehotel-spa)  
Chain offers 120 renovated rooms and a modern business center. Rooms from about \$130.

**Hotel la Reine**  
Avenue Reine Astrid 86  
011-328-777-5210  
Online: [www.lareine.be/en](http://www.lareine.be/en)  
Family hotel near the center of town features 14 simple and quiet rooms, all on the ground floor. Rooms from about \$90.

## Where to eat

**La Cour de la Reine**  
Avenue Reine Astrid 86  
011-328-777-5210  
Online: [www.lareine.be/en/restaurant](http://www.lareine.be/en/restaurant)  
Stylish restaurant specializes in modern, regional cuisine but also offers aged steaks, venison and delicious desserts. Entrees start at about \$21.

**L'O de Source**  
Place Pierre le Grand 2  
011-328-722-1139  
Online: [lodesource.be](http://lodesource.be)  
A young couple runs this cozy restaurant at the intersection of gastronomy and tradition. Prix fixe starts at about \$37.

**L'Auberge**  
Place du Monument 3  
011-328-777-4833  
Online: [auberge-spa.be/en/hotel-restaurant-spa](http://auberge-spa.be/en/hotel-restaurant-spa)  
Traditional brasserie in the heart of the town is the perfect place to try regional specialties. Entrees start at about \$27.

## What to do

**Museum of Spa**  
Avenue Reine Astrid, 77b  
011-328-777-4486  
Online: [spavillroyale.be](http://spavillroyale.be)  
Housed in the former palatial residence of Queen Marie Henriette of Belgium, this fascinating museum retraces the history of the town. Open from 2 to 6 p.m. March 2 to Nov. 10. Admission costs about \$5 for adults; about \$1 for children.

**Les Thermes de Spa**  
Colline d'Annette et Lubin  
011-328-777-2560  
Online: [thermesdespa.com](http://thermesdespa.com)  
Modern and traditional physical treatments — including mineral baths, mud baths, showers and massages — are offered. Open 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Thursday and Saturday; 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. Friday; and 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Sunday. Costs start at about \$23 for adults, \$17 for children.

**Museum of Laundry**  
Rue Hanster 1  
011-328-777-4118  
Online: [spatourisme.be/en/laundry-museum](http://spatourisme.be/en/laundry-museum)  
Learn about the evolution of every trade involved in the running of a resort town. Open 2 to 6 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Admission costs about \$5 for adults; about \$1 for children.



The Pavillon des Petits Jeux is one of several Belle Epoque structures that combine iron and glass in Spa, Belgium, at the Parc de Sept Heures — so named because bathers would often stroll here at the end of the day on the advice of doctors.

## FROM PAGE 30

century, so we strolled into the Parc de Sept Heures, one of three public landscaped parks. Inaugurated in 1758, the park is dotted with Belle Epoque constructions, often melding wrought iron and glass. There are pavilions, kiosks and a covered promenade where patients were instructed to stroll several times a day.

I was sorry to miss the weekly Sunday flea market, but all this walking made me thirsty, so we went into Pouhon Pierre le Grand, a newly restored octagonal pavilion dating to the 19th century that serves as a monument to Peter I and also houses the main town spring. Under the towering glass rotunda, I helped myself to a paper cup and finally sipped the sparkling mineral water. Crater, shimmering acidic with a hint of sulfur, it felt invigorating.

The next day, so that I might understand the underground path of that magical water, Plein drove me along country roads lined with historical mansions and villas to the high plateau that sits above the main water table. We followed marked trails (the area counts 200 of them) through meadows and groves toward the Forest and Water Museum of the Bernzennne Domain.

"Here, it rains an average of 230 days a year. Plein said as we watched a presentation about the decades-long process that starts with rain and ends at the springs through layers of moss, peat, clay, sand and quartz schists. Later, we hiked the four-mile Promenade des Artistes through the golden forest and along a river. Lunch on the terrace of La source de la Geronstere, near the spring of the same name, was restorative and delicious.

The next morning, I headed to the so-called "Laundry Museum," unsure of what fell within that category. But Paul Jehin, the co-founder and a passionate sociologist, explained his mission simply: "We wanted to pay tribute to the beehive of unsung local workers who labored for decades behind the scenes, while their employers, most often foreigners, strolled, partied and took the waters."

Spa, with its hotels and casinos, swarmed with coachmen and cleaners, waiters, cooks and the laundresses who organized themselves in small ateliers. Jehin has amassed a treasure trove of objects and machinery: dozens of flatirons spanning several centuries; soap powder boxes with their first advertisements; fine sheets, ancient articles of clothing; even the first mechanical washing machines.

Finally, I was ready for the physical part of my research. The Renaissance-style Thermes building, dating to 1868, is no longer in use, so I hopped on the historic trolley that leads up the hill to Les Thermes de Spa, a modern complex surrounded by nature. There, I chose to take a bath in one of the antique copper bathtubs filled with heated mineral water from the Marie Henriette spring. On my skin, myriad bubbles appeared, creating a deliciously relaxing aquatic shudder. A shower massage soothed my sore muscles; later, I went swimming in the gigantic pool. Surrounded by the forest, I fell asleep on the lounge chair and dreamed there was a czar taking the waters next to me.

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## WEEKEND: TRAVEL

## Pacific

## Bringing tourists into the fold

Author learns to make Nepalese dumplings with help of Backstreet Academy

BY ANDREA SACHS  
The Washington Post

**D**il Kumari Maharjan looked at my misshapen dumpling and said with a deceptive smile, “You made an American momo.”

That was not a compliment.

During a week in Kathmandu, I ate momos like a Nepalese, causing platefuls of the popular snack food to vanish with the wave of a fork — not that I would ever use a utensil. According to proper momo etiquette, you must remove the middle-man and dig right in with your hands.

The dumplings are eaten throughout South Asia and particularly in Nepal, which adopted the dish from Tibet. Several chain restaurants in Kathmandu, such as Everest Momo and Magic Momo, specialize in the anytime food. Momos appear on the menus at the five-star Hotel Yak and Yeti and at Jazz Upstairs, a live music venue. They show up on wedding buffet lines and inspire eponymous festivals. Friends throw momo parties.

I tasted my first steamed momo at an alleyway joint called Chinese Kitchen and Burger House and Fast Food, near Patan Durbar Square. I paid less than a buck for 10 veggie dumplings the size of pupas. After that inaugural sampling, many more momos followed, including several dozen made by a pair of inexpert — yes, American — hands.

Dil and her husband, Purna, teach the art of momo-making at their Kathmandu home. The couple work with Backstreet Academy, the Nepal-based organization that pairs skilled locals with visitors seeking an intimate cultural experience. The peer-to-peer site arranges classes and tours in 25 cities in 10 Asian countries, including Laos, Vietnam, Thailand and Indonesia. In Kathmandu, experts instruct novices on how to drape a sari, paint a Buddhist thangka and sew a laptop case out of Dhaka cloth. The city food tours lead guests to the best street stalls or take them out for a traditional Nepalese breakfast of sel roti, a donut-like pastry; malpua, an Indian pancake; gwarimari, a round bread; and bottomless cups of chai.

Home chefs also invite visitors into their kitchens. Ruby Shrestha, a stay-at-home mom who knits for extra income, teaches her students to make dal bhat (lentil soup and rice), the unofficial dish of Nepal. Nima Sherpa, a housewife enjoying her empty-nest years, whips up vegetable curry and sela roti. Purna, whose on-line bio says he wants to use his cooking skills to avert poverty and provide a good education for his son, runs two courses: Cooking Momos with Home Chefs: Nepal's Favorite Dish, and Kathmandu Fear Factor Challenge: An Inside(r) Way to Eating Buffalo. The edible anatomy lesson includes blood, testicles, brain, lungs, liver, spinal cord and eyeballs.

My friend Julie and I opted for the more benevolent momo, which is offensive to none but the tight waistband. The dumplings come in several varieties, such as chicken, vegetable and buffalo, the most popular filling. Our interpreter, Aarjoo, told us that momo eaters often consume about 15 pieces per outing, though the snack can easily cross the line into bingeing. Purna said their 14-year-old son once tossed back 25 medium-size buffalo momos. Thankfully, he was at school during our noon class, so I didn't have to



**Above: Julie Lopez shows off the product of her dumpling-folding skills in the momo-making class at the home of Kathmandu residents Purna and Dil Maharjan. The couple work with Backstreet Academy, a Nepal-based organization that pairs locals with visitors seeking intimate cultural experiences.**

**JULIE LOPEZ/For The Washington Post**

**Left: Purna Maharjan plates the steamed momos that are accompanied by a side of achar sauce, also made from scratch.**

**ANDREA SACHS/The Washington Post**

tenants) and climbed the stairs to our classroom. Shoes off, apron on, and don't even touch a speck of coriander till you wash your hands.

Purna started with an overview of ingredients, which he had chopped up in advance and arrayed at our work station, a low coffee table inches from a couch. A large vessel contained carrots, soybeans, cabbage, bell peppers, spring onions and boiled potatoes. (We requested vegan momos, but vegetarians can add paneer, too.) The flavor lineup started salt, masala, chili powder, ginger and garlic paste. There was also mustard oil in a recycled plastic water bottle; whole tomatoes, coriander and parsley for the achar dipping sauce; and a mound of wheat flour for the dough.

Our first task was to mix and mash the veggies with our fingers. While we worked, the couple told us about their

## KNOW &amp; GO

## What to do

**Backstreet Academy**  
backstreetacademy.com

The organization recruits skilled locals to lead tours and teach classes in Kathmandu. The Cooking Momos with Home Chefs course is held daily, with several time slots available per day. Price is \$19 per person, plus a 7 percent service fee. The company adds a \$5 surcharge if the number of participants does not meet the minimum requirement. An interpreter will meet the students at a predetermined spot and walk them to the instructor's home.

**Online:** welcomenepal.com

lives. Purna, who is 38 years old, sells incense and has been an instructor with Backstreet for six years. In 2014, he won the Backstreet Travelers' "favorite host" award, an honor that hangs by the front door. Dil, 36, works in handicrafts. Their parents had arranged their marriage, still a common practice in Nepal. As we chatted, the gleeful sounds of playing schoolchildren and a wedding processional wafted through the open window.

After Purna kneaded the dough, we formed small balls and flattened them into sand dollars. We rolled out the little patties, receiving real-time critiques from Purna: "Too thin." "Too long." We used a round cutter to create perfect circles and filled the disks with the veggie blend.

And now, the hard part.

Purna placed five dumpling shapes before us. We ooohed and aahed in admiration. They were so artfully crafted that each one deserved its own rotating pedestal. He first demonstrated how to make the round momo, which usually contains buffalo meat. Thirteen pinches and twist. I lost count after seven and smothered and contorted the dough instead. For the fishtail-braid-style, he pinched the top and then plaited. Left, right, pinch; left, right, pinch — till the final closure at the tip. The Chinese dumpling was easier: Create a taco and fold the edges over until they kiss. There was also a momo that resembled hamantaschen and one with pleats that culminated in a mohawk.

I flitted between the fishtail and round designs, with varying success. "C, B-plus, B-plus, A-OK," Purna said, as I held each one up.

The A was a pity grade, but I did not protest.

Purna briefly left us to make the sauce. We took a break from folding to join him by the mortar and pestle on the floor. He pulverized the skinned tomatoes, garlic, coriander, Sichuan pepper, soybean powders, salt and only a dash of chili powder — because I am heat-intolerant. He dropped our dumplings into the steamer, where they would cook for 10 minutes on a two-burner electric stove.

Purna poured us a glass of rice wine that he had fermented for a month and plated the dumplings. The American- and Nepalese-made momos sat side by side, like friends around a coffee table.

"The look doesn't matter," he said, as we popped momos together. "They all taste the same."

## WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

## Pacific

## Seafood fit for a king

Impressive shellfish abound at Nijo Market in Hokkaido

By SETH ROBSON  
Stars and Stripes

**T**he seafood section of Sapporo's Nijo Market isn't on the scale of Tokyo's famous Tsukiji Market — but the monster king crabs for sale there look like they could compete for Japan's crustacean crown.

The market, a short walk from Sapporo's TV Tower, includes about two dozen street-side shops situated along the banks of the Sosei River selling a wide variety of seafood.

Locals say Nijo Market dates back to the 19th century during Hokkaido's frontier age, where it served as a pantry for settlers and was filled with stalls selling local farm produce and seafood — not unlike the market of today.

Vendors keep warm in Sapporo's chilly winter temperatures standing beside gas heaters as they show off their wares available for purchase.

The seafood is packed in ice — but in Hokkaido's harsh winter conditions, it seems an unnecessary measure.

You might not see fishmongers slicing up giant tuna here, but the rows of oversized oysters and crustaceans (which include king crabs, hairy crabs and snow crabs) should be enough to satisfy any traveler's desire to see some of Japan's world-famous seafood up close.

Most of the outlets also sell prepackaged seafood products that are ideal omiyage, or souvenirs, for tourists. Looking for a bite to eat? Travelers can sample a selection of cooked items, including barbecued scallops and uni (also known as sea urchin), which is a Hokkaido specialty, at some shops.

If you want to sit down, head deeper into the market to find several restaurants nestled amongst the vendors.

Shushidokoro Keiran, tucked away in a nondescript corner of one of the outlets, offers diners respite from the cold. The restaurant's seafood meals are both fresh and delicious, making this an ideal spot to satisfy any hunger cravings during an afternoon of exploring.



Hokkaido's Nijo Market is famous for its wide variety of local seafood.

Shushidokoro Keiran's specialty is sashimi don, or rice bowls topped with slices of raw fish. The sashimi don range in price from 980 yen (about \$8.65) up to a pricey 4,200 yen, depending on the size and what types of fish are included.

The sashimi at Shushidokoro Keiran is thicker and tastier than what you typically get in Tokyo. Most orders also come with a side of crab soup, which includes a meaty and delicious crab leg. A glass of ice-cold Sapporo beer, also local to this city, is the perfect way to wash down your meal.

Visiting Nijo Market is a great way to immerse yourself into the rhythm of Sapporo — and it's also not a bad way to sample some world-class seafood, either.

robson.seth@stripes.com  
Twitter: @SethRobson1



The sashimi don at Shushidokoro Keiran range in price from 980 yen (about \$8.65) up to 4,200 yen, depending on portion size and types of fish.



PHOTOS BY SETH ROBSON/Stars and Stripes

The seafood section of Sapporo's Nijo Market isn't nearly as large as Tokyo's famous Tsukiji Market, but the monster king crabs for sale look like they could compete for Japan's crustacean crown.

## ON THE QT

## DIRECTIONS

Address: 1 Chome Minami 3 Joghigashi, Chuo Ward, Sapporo, Hokkaido 060-0053  
Nijo Market is accessible via the Sapporo Subway Toho Line at Hosuisusukino Station (6-minute walk) or the Sapporo Subway Namboku, Toho or Tozai Lines at Odori Station (7-minute walk).

## TIMES

Shops — 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.  
Restaurants — 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

## INFORMATION

Phone: 011-222-5308  
Online: nijomarket.com

— Seth Robson



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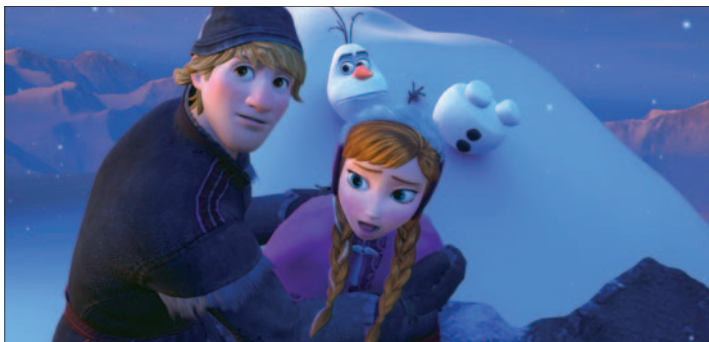
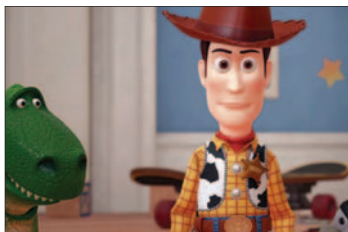


## WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES



Set in a vast array of Disney and Pixar worlds, "Kingdom Hearts 3" follows the journey of Sora, a young boy and unknowing heir to a spectacular power. Kristoff, Olaf and Anna from "Frozen," as well as Woody and Rex from "Toy Story," are among the many characters who make appearances.

Photos courtesy of Square Enix



# Star power

It has a baffling backstory, but 'Kingdom Hearts 3' is a treat for Disney, Pixar fans

By CHRISTOPHER BYRD  
Special to The Washington Post

Whenever a popular, story-infused video game is released and has a few numbers in its title, the question, "Do you need to play the previous ones in the series?" usually pops up. The vast majority of the time I say "no."

No, you don't need to play the earlier Elder Scrolls, Red Dead Redemption, Assassin's Creed, The Witcher or Persona games to forge a deep connection with the latest incarnation. But if you ask me this question about "Kingdom Hearts 3," well ...

To the uninitiated, the first thing to know is that "Kingdom Hearts 3" is the 10th entry in a series that mashes up characters from the "Final Fantasy" and Disney universes. The series has accumulated enough knotty story lines since its debut in 2002 to make studying a summary of the events a bit of a chore for anyone with only a slight interest in the ramifications of the Keyblade Wars.

Suffice it to say, "Kingdom Hearts 3" stars Sora, an



unflappable, good-natured kid who befriends Donald, Goofy and a certain royal mouse named King Mickey. All are capable keyblade wielders (keyblades being the material incarnation of warriors' hearts). Together, they and a bunch of allies fight against those who want to forge a powerful keyblade that can access Kingdom Hearts, the haven of all the hearts in the world. Catching up on the backstory requires keeping track of characters — some with similar names — who have a habit of dividing themselves into different incarnations, losing control of their wills, getting stuck in different worlds or forgetting important events. Listening to the characters discuss this stuff left me with the impression that they weren't so much chatting with each other as summarizing and advancing plot points.

If this sounds too close to an invitation to wade into the waters of delirious fan fiction, you have my sympathies. But, however eye-glazing "Kingdom Hearts 3's" overarching narrative may be, it's worth stressing how easy it is to get swept up in the broad strokes of its gameplay and the more isolated story beats in the game. Running into the Little Chef from "Ratatouille," dancing with the Rapunzel of "Tangled," visiting a toy store with the characters from "Toy Story" or helping out Queen Elsa of "Frozen," will elicit fuzzy feelings in anyone who is

disposed to the charms of Disney and Pixar.

As a game, "Kingdom Hearts 3" takes an everything-but-the-kitchen-sink approach. There are plenty of minigames in it that are diverting, but not much more. Though I enjoyed spending a little time with the gang from Winnie the Pooh, helping Rabbit harvest vegetables by playing a basic-color match game wasn't terribly exciting. Neither was traveling between worlds in a little spaceship, the mechanics of which didn't seem far removed from one of the old "Star Fox" games.

In any case, the game's core combat mechanics are a delight. Sora & Co.'s battles against the minions of darkness are spectacular. The combat is fluid and full of rainbow-colored swirls, starry shapes and other visual doodads. Sora can summon a variety of repurposed theme park rides like a merry-go-round, spinning teacups or a white-water rapids ride to help clobber enemies. He can also avail himself of more exotic means such as taking to the air in a rocket with Woody and Buzz from "Toy Story" or hopping on the back of Simba from "The Lion King." The gorgeous eruptions of lights over the battlefields could give "Destiny 2" a run for its money.

"Kingdom Hearts 3" is a game I would recommend to parents looking for something to play with their kids or to adults with a soft spot for Disney. Though it's weighed down by its lore, which only children are likely to become invested in, its razzle-dazzle gameplay and steady parade of cameo appearances will appeal to those with a taste for the ludicrous.

**Platforms:** PlayStation 4, Xbox One  
**Online:** kingdomhearts.com



More game reviews at [stripes.com/games](https://www.stripes.com/games)



## WEEKEND: LIFESTYLE



# Braised and Infused

As legalization movement spreads, pot going upscale with gourmet dinners, artisanal treats and sleek dispensaries

By LAVANYA RAMANATHAN  
*The Washington Post*

**E**milia Montalvo tried marijuana in high school like so many others, back when sneaking bong hits behind your parents' backs was half of its allure.

But she had put it far behind her. She started a family and launched a career in the Washington, D.C., area.

Then, three years ago, the District decriminalized marijuana, and suddenly, what had once been illicit seemed ubiquitous, even in her suburb of Springfield, Va. So at 27, Montalvo decided that she'd try pot again. She opted for a vape pen, with its discreet, near-scentless oils.

"It's getting more comfortable for me as I go out and see more people doing it," she says. "I don't feel like I'm doing something wrong or illegal."

A nationwide legalization movement is chipping away at old stigmas — last November, Massachusetts opened the floodgates to recreational marijuana sales, joining California, Nevada, Colorado, Oregon and Washington state, with the District of Columbia perhaps headed the same way.

The ranks of marijuana users are growing among all adults, but particularly those who are settling into their child-raising, 401(k)-contributing years. The National Survey on Drug Use and Health found that in 2017, the number of people older than

26 occasionally using marijuana had grown by 3.2 million in three years.

"We see stay-at-home moms, lawyers, chefs, construction workers and baby boomers," says Case Van Dorne, a co-founder of the Oregon dispensary chain Five Zero Trees.

And as with every other yuppie craze, an industry has grown up to support it, with crafty appeal to upscale and middle-aged tastes. There are gourmet "infused" dinners, dispensaries with the sleek aesthetic of an Apple store, and artisanal treats (Mints! Chocolate truffles!) that would look right at place in Whole Foods.

It was clear something was afoot with the typical marijuana customer when vaporizers packaged like iPhones in gleaming gold hit the market, and MedMen, a marijuana-dispensing chain claiming the mantle of "the Barneys of weed," opened this spring on New York's Fifth Avenue. One San Francisco dispensary resembles a swank hotel bar.

"If you can walk down to a nice retail storefront, and you've got really clever marketing and packaging ... there's some allure to that," says Ryan Vandrey, a cannabis expert at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine.

**'It's getting more comfortable for me as I go out and see more people doing it. I don't feel like I'm doing something wrong.'**

Emilia Montalvo

birth consultant and suburban mom in Springfield, Va., pictured at right

PHOTO BY BILL O'LEARY/Washington Post  
ILLUSTRATION BY SEAN VENABLES/Stars and Stripes

## WEEKEND: MUSIC

# How

country singer

# LUKE

# COMBS

took his  
own path  
and became  
the fastest-rising  
star in Nashville

By EMILY YAHN  
*The Washington Post*

About three years ago, songwriter Jonathan Singleton was at a bar in Nashville when a singer he didn't recognize took the stage. Suddenly, the crowd started buzzing, as though a superstar had just arrived. "What is happening?" Singleton asked his friends, but they didn't know, either. Singleton caught the singer's name and then discreetly took out his phone to Google: Who is "Luke Combs"?

Singleton had no idea that soon it would be tough to find a country music listener who didn't know the answer. But at that moment, as he heard Combs' powerhouse voice belt out a song called "Hurricane," he knew that he wanted to work with the guy. A few months later, Singleton signed Combs to a publishing deal with Big Machine Music. "Hurricane" eventually went triple platinum.

Fast-forward to now, and Combs, 28, has shot to stardom so quickly that it's startling to almost everyone, including him. After he landed a record deal with Sony Music's Columbia Nashville in fall 2016, his first four singles reached No. 1 on the radio, with the fifth ("Beautiful Crazy") expected to soon hit the top of the chart. His debut record, "This One's For You," was the highest-selling country album of 2018. Most of the dates on his first arena headlining tour are already sold out. On Feb. 10, he was in the national spotlight at the Grammy Awards, where he was nominated for best new artist (British singer-songwriter Dua Lipa won the award).

CONTINUED ON PAGE 37



Courtesy of Sacks & Co.

## WEEK-END: MUSIC REVIEWS

## The Lemonheads

Varshons 2 (Fire Records)

Cover versions have played an conflicting role for Evan Dando and The Lemonheads. Their takes on "Luka" and "Mrs. Robinson" cleared paths but also blocked them in for some listeners.

Nonetheless, 2009's "Varshons" — with songs by Gram Parsons, Wire and Leonard Cohen, among others — was hailed as an excellent if stopgap effort until the surely imminent release of original material. Barely a decade on, "Varshons 2" follows up and repeats the quality of its predecessor and hopes for a full album of self-penned material have mostly dissipated. So get used to Evan Dando as interpreter instead of songwriter — with so long between releases, that'll be time to adjust.

In most cases, Dando respects the original arrangements, with his de-stressed and bittersweet vocals adding an extra layer of emotion to excellent songs, like Paul Westerberg's "Things," NRBQ's "Magnet," and Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds' "Straight to You."

Nashville's Natural Child get a tip of the hat with "Now and Then," which has three guitarists, a "Brimful of Asha"-like rhythm and will hopefully send listeners their way. On some tracks — John Prine's "Speed of the Sound of Loneliness" and Lucinda Williams' "Abandonment," for example — Dando picks up some of the vocal fingerprints of the originals, which comes across as endearing where it could be irritating.

Marciana Jones — part of TSP with Dando and Willy Mason — contributes excellent backing vocals.

Is closer "Take It Easy," the Eagles' anthem of the laid back Dando's tongue-in-cheek allusion to his slacker take is "Varshons 3" next or, at long last, his own songs? Better have a seat while you wait.

— Pablo Gorondi  
Associated Press

## The Motet

Death or Devotion  
(The Motet)

Unsuspecting listeners might stumble into "Death or Devotion" and, based on first impressions, figure that it's a lost funk/soul gem from the late 1970s. They may even guess The Motet is a band whose only album — maybe long out-of-print or even hardly ever in-print — was discovered by a crate-digging DJ in a basement record store in Brooklyn or Los Angeles.

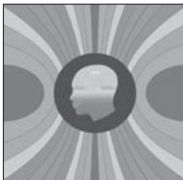
In fact, The Motet is a Denver-based septet that's been around for nearly two decades and "Death or Devotion" is the band's ninth studio album. It is a funk/soul gem, but luckily it's not at all lost.

Already on lead track "Highly Compatible," The Motet's intentions are clear. Strings, horn accents, vintage keyboard sounds, funky bass grooves and Lyle Divinsky's vocals are all at the service of a smooth flow that's dancefloor ready and a fun listen to boot.

The album's first single, "Whacha Gonna Bring," besides conveying a message of tolerance and understanding, was tied to efforts to sign up voters for last year's mid-term election. While the album's title isn't directly mentioned in the single's lyrics, the song attempts to inspire some reflection and make us more conscious about the choices we make and the attitudes we assume.

There's a lot of positivity in the songs, plenty of passion — both idealist and sensual — and it all comes full circle with the nearly instrumental "Speed of Light," which sounds like a Rick James riff done like Daft Punk where even the usually overused vocoder fits the bill.

— Pablo Gorondi  
Associated Press



## Bob Mould

Sunshine Rock (Merge)

Indie-rock pioneer Bob Mould has used recent albums to work through serious issues.

The Husker Du and Sugar frontman wrote his "Beauty and Ruin" album after his father died and wrote "Patch the Sky" after losing his mom. For "Sunshine Rock," Mould focused on happier themes.

If the album title wasn't enough of a clue, there are also songs called "Sunny Love Song," "Camp Sunshine" and "Western Sunset." All that sunshine hasn't blunted Mould's edge, though.

"Thirteen Dozen Roses" is as raucous as ever, with Jon Wurster pounding away at the drums and bassist Jason Narducci thumping along to show why the Foo Fighters have long idolized Mould. "What Do You Want Me to Do" is another hard-hitting triumph in the same vein as the Husker Du classic "Makes No Sense at All."

However, it's the softer moments of "Sunshine Rock" that show how much things have changed for Mould, who now makes his home in Germany. He approaches "Camp Sunshine" with childlike wonder, as he sings about the thrill of "the days I get to spend making music with my friends." It's a sweet change of pace, as is "The Final Years," with a serene synthesizer riff and a groove reminiscent of Smashing Pumpkins' 1979 "Of course, not everything is lighthearted here. The single "Lost Faith" addresses a crisis of conscience, as Mould sings, "I've lost faith in everything, every thing" over a driving beat. But by the time he reaches the chorus, he offers hope, singing, "We all lose faith in troubled times, you know I'm gonna be right here."

That line encapsulates the feel of "Sunshine Rock" and pays tribute to the craftsman that Mould's craftsmanship has been for nearly four decades.

— Glenn Gamboa  
Newsday



## FROM PAGE 36

"It's really the fastest thing I've ever seen in this town," said Singleton, who has written hits for Tim McGraw, Billy Currington, Gary Allan and others. The thing he remembers most from that first night is how loudly fans sang along to Combs' songs, which found early popularity online. "He really hit the nail on the head of what they were looking for."

It has all led to an enduring mystery that everyone in Nashville wants to solve — how other singers can replicate Combs' success.

"People always ask me, 'What's the secret?'" Combs said in a phone interview, laughing. "If I knew what it was, I would be bottling it and selling it instead of what I'm doing now. I would be trying to manufacture whatever it is."

Pressed for an answer, Combs will offer that it's a combination of things: Hard work. Personal sacrifice. Luck. Timing. Surrounding yourself with trustworthy writers. Writing songs that you would want to hear on the radio.

Others point to Combs' traditional '90s country-influenced sound, which, combined with modern production, struck a chord with fans, or suggest that some singers just have that intangible X-factor. Bob Willford, Combs' bandleader and frequent songwriting partner, has another theory.

"I genuinely think for him, it's nothing but the lack of trying to have a brand. It's literally authenticity at its core. It's unabashed, 'This is who I am.' It's the lyric, it's the melodies, it's the production, it's the guy that grew up in a black PFG shirt every night," Willford said of Combs' signature Performance Fishing Gear apparel. "It's 100 percent authentic. You can't fool people when it comes to that."

When Combs moved to Nashville in September 2014, a "brand" was the furthest thing from his mind. A North Carolina native, Combs had enjoyed



Courtesy of Sacks &amp; Co.

**Luke Combs, above, modeled his career after that of fellow North Carolinian Eric Church by building a solid fan base before achieving superstardom.**

singing in middle school and high school but first picked up a guitar in college at Appalachian State University about 2011. He started out playing gigs at the same bar where he worked in Boone, N.C., and persuaded his boss to charge \$1 a ticket — he made \$200 one night, and it dawned on him that maybe, one day, he could earn a living playing music.

He scraped together enough cash to record two EPs and posted performance videos to Facebook and Vine. He racked up thousands of followers and began playing every bar in the area, sometimes with a crowd of a few hundred. Combs' music idol was Eric Church, a fellow North Carolinian who proved you can pave your own way in Nashville, as long as you build a solid fan base first. Still, it wasn't easy, as music quickly took priority over academics.

"I was driving to clubs and playing shows ... but barely making any money," said Combs, who wound up leaving school without a degree. "Eventually, it was where I was like, 'I need to move to Nashville or just stop doing this.'"

When Combs made the permanent leap to Music City, he continued to tour in the Southeast, and earned a following. He co-wrote songs with other newcomers who didn't have connections with established songwriters.

"We got in there and were, like, 'Hey, we don't really know how the game works,'" said Ray Fulcher, who co-wrote eight songs on Combs' debut album. "Instead of figuring that out, we said, 'Let's just write some songs that we would want to listen to.'"

The strategy paid off, especially with "Hurricane," which Combs wrote with

Thomas Archer and Taylor Phillips. Even though he didn't think it was "outstandingly memorable," he uploaded it to iTunes; it sold nearly 15,000 copies in a week. The song, describing the jolt of unexpectedly seeing an ex, became Combs' first hit. He used the money from "Hurricane" to master another EP. It caught the attention of a booking agent, a manager and other influential people in town. Then he signed with Columbia Nashville, a joint deal with independent label River House Artists.

Although the plan was to slowly and deliberately build his fan base, his singles turned into streaming and radio smashes and sold faster than expected. "When It Rains It Pours," about a guy who gets dumped and then has a streak of good luck, "One Number Away," about the temptation to call an ex; "She Got the Best Of Me," the aftermath of a rough breakup; and "Beautiful Crazy," a much more optimistic tune, inspired by his girlfriend-turned-recent fiancée, Nicole Hocking. Two weeks ago, Combs became the first solo artist since Tim McGraw in 2000 to have two songs simultaneously in the Top 10 of the Billboard Country Airplay chart. ("Welcome to the club buddy," McGraw tweeted to Combs.)

Even as Combs has gone from playing for 250 people in bars to selling out 12,500-seat arenas, he's determined not to forget his working-class roots, his true connection with his die-hard fans. He still wears his black PFG shirt onstage every night, and although that resulted in an endorsement deal with Columbia Sportswear, his fans just see the guy with a beard and black shirt and hat and boots, dressed very similarly to them. Singleton said they call those fans "Luke-alikes."

"When those fans are there, they see themselves up there," Fulcher said, adding that Combs often tells his audience, "If I can do this, you can literally do whatever your dream is."

"He really believes that ... when he says it, the resonance really strikes people."



## WEEKEND: BOOKS

DIRTY  
WORK

Stephanie Land's memoir 'Maid' is a gritty exploration of poverty in America

By MOIRA MACDONALD  
*The Seattle Times*

“My daughter learned to walk in a homeless shelter.” That’s the brief, searing opening sentence of Stephanie Land’s just-published memoir ‘Maid: Hard Work, Low Pay and a Mother’s Will to Survive.’ In it, she writes about how, as a young single mother, she extricated herself from an abusive relationship and spent years supporting her daughter Mia by cleaning houses — physically demanding work that paid minimum wage without benefits — and struggling against a system seemingly stacked against the working poor.

Barbara Ehrenreich, whose “Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting by in America” explored similar territory almost 20 years ago, wrote the introduction to Land’s book. “If this book inspires you, which it may,” she writes, “remember how close it came to never being written. Stephanie might have given in to despair or exhaustion; she might have suffered a disabling injury at work. Think too of all the women who, for reasons like that, never manage to get their stories told.”

Land’s story unfolds in a Pacific Northwest landscape. That homeless shelter (and subsequent transitional housing) was in Port Townsend; the tiny, mildewed studio apartment she later shared with her daughter was in Mount Vernon; the city to which she and Mia eventually moved was Missoula, Mont., where Land slowly worked her way through college in her 30s — and finally realized her longtime dream of becoming a writer.

“Maid” was born as a college essay called “Confessions of the Housekeeper,” but quickly it grew. “I sent a pitch to (the online magazine) Vox that wasn’t really

a pitch, it was more like, Dear Editor: I wrote this in college, maybe you might like it,” recalled Land, in a recent telephone interview from her Missoula home.

She sent two paragraphs from the essay, describing her experiences cleaning for an early client: the Sad House, the home of a frail widower “dying slowly in a shrine that hadn’t changed since his wife had passed away.” In “Maid,” Land writes that before the Sad House, she’d thought of cleaning as “a mindless job and something to pay my bills, but now it felt like the work had an unexpected imprint on my life, and the vulnerability I was exposed to somehow relieved me of my own.”

Vox’s response was quick: “They emailed back almost immediately, offering me \$500 — a huge amount of money, the most money I thought I was ever going to make,” said Land. The resulting story was published on Vox in July 2015.

The morning it went live, my sleepy little WordPress website was getting 4,000 or 5,000 hits an hour,” Land remembered. The story went viral, and a literary agent

contacted Land that morning, asking if she had a book in the works. “I emailed back, ‘Yay! I do!’ He said, great, send me a few chapters. So I very quickly wrote a few chapters and sent them, and it just kind of went on from there.” A book deal with Hachette was signed less than a year later.

“Maid” focuses on a two-year period of Land’s life, when she worked as a housecleaner for an agency — one that charged clients \$25 an hour, of which the cleaner only received \$9. “My editor at Hachette really encouraged the social-justice part to come out,” Land said, referring to her struggles with public assistance and housing despite her willingness to work. “To me, that was like describing a peanut butter-and-jelly sandwich — it was so much my day-to-day existence that I thought it was really boring.”

Rereading Ehrenreich’s book, in which the author tries to get by on a series of minimum-wage jobs (diner waitress, housecleaner, Walmart clerk), made her realize otherwise. “Her whole book was about trying to find housing and trying to find your next meal, and I kind of forgot that wasn’t normal for most people. It helped bring out a lot of that, talking about going from the homeless shelter to transitional housing, and all that was involved in securing housing.”

Land’s book is rich with poignant detail, about cleaning houses filthy with neglect (“a film of dusty grease, like rubber cement, covers the kitchen”), about the scorn and derision she receives from both strangers and friends when she temporarily relies on food stamps (“You’re welcome,” a friend pointedly says, adding “my tax money’s paying for all of that”); of the struggle to provide for her daughter and of the solace that Mia gave her. Of weekends spent together, doing puzzles and exploring beaches, she wrote,

“Suddenly, my week of teeth-grinding grit would fade. And we would drift in a bubble, just me and this amazing kid.”

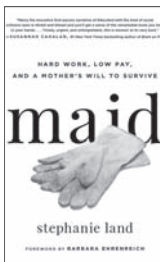
Some of her cleaning clients were friendly and kind; others were not. Land doesn’t spare us the grossest descriptions (cleaning a stranger’s toilet is exactly what you think it is), but she’s careful not to vilify her employer.

It was a tough job; housecleaners were expected to work as fast as possible (clients paying by the hour didn’t want to feel overcharged), with no sick pay, paid vacation or perks of any kind. Hours were impossible to predict, making it hard to take a second job, and rarely added up to 40 paid hours a week. Unpaid hours — washing her own cleaning rags at night, driving to and from distant clients, redoing work that clients weren’t pleased with — were plentiful, and repetitive stress injuries were frequent. But the owner of the cleaning company “worked alongside me a lot, and that says something, I think, for the financial place that she was in,” said Land. “I wouldn’t fault her too much. This was the height of the recession and people were struggling everywhere in general. I understand what she was going through.”

A freelance writer for several years, contributing through platforms that include the Economic Hardship Reporting Project (founded by Ehrenreich) and the Center for Community Change, Land no longer cleans houses.

In addition to the book and its upcoming tour, she’s doing some teaching through a local writers’ group, and hopes to get more into advocacy and mentorship of young writers.

“I think it’s so important to lift up more voices from people who have lived these experiences,” said Land. “I think that’s how we’re going to make a change in this country, if we start listening to people who have actually been there.”



## WEEKEND: TELEVISION &amp; DVD

## NEW ON DVD

**"Bohemian Rhapsody":** The examination of the creative and destructive nature of genius through Freddie Mercury (Rami Malek) and Queen offers insight into both the musical madness of the band and the emotional insanity Mercury dealt with during his short-lived career. He died in 1991 at the age of 45 from bronchial pneumonia brought on by AIDS.

Anthony McCarten's ("Darkest Hour") script hits all the big moments, ranging from Mercury's unusual relationship with Mary Austin (Lucy Boynton) to the creation of some of Queen's most memorable works. Just when the film begins to slip into a master class in music, McCarten directs the story back to one of the many personal relationships. There are some gaps in the story, but that's always the case with a biography. Telling every detail would take a lifetime.

As for the music, not every great Queen song is featured, but their catalogue of hits would also dramatically increase the movie's running time. What is included makes this a soundtrack that is a must to own, even if you have every Queen album.



Photos courtesy of Lifetime



Twentieth Century Fox

From left: Gwilym Lee and Rami Malek are two of the stars of "Bohemian Rhapsody," now on DVD.

Also available on DVD:  
**"The Front Runner":** Hugh Jackman portrays charismatic politician Gary Hart.  
**"Frontline: Documenting Hate":** Two-part investigation into white supremacy groups in the U.S.  
**"The Poison Ivy Collection":** Contains the four films featuring the deadly temptress.  
**"Moko Jumbie":** A young woman returns to Trinidad only to find forbidden love.  
**"The Happy Prince":** Oscar Wilde looks back at his life with wit and irony as he lies on his deathbed.  
**"At Eternity's Gate":** Willem Dafoe stars in this film based on letters written by Vincent van Gogh.

**"Nobody's Fool":** Wild child (Tiffany Haddish) looks to her conservative sister (Tika Sumpter) to get her life in order.

**"Four Weddings and a Funeral":** The 1994 romantic comedy is being rereleased to mark the 25th anniversary.

**"Maria by Callas":** Toni Volpakes has his directing debut with this look at the story of the Greek/American opera singer Maria Callas.

**"Valentine":** The tale of a cupid-masked killer who slashes teens was originally released in 2010. Denise Richards stars.

**"Haunted Hospital: Heilstaten":** A group of vloggers gets more than they expected when they illegally access a condemned asylum.

**"Shoplifters":** Dysfunctional band of out-siders are united by fierce loyalty.

**"American Experience: The Swamp":** Explores the unique ecosystems of the Florida Everglades.

**"Antonio Lopez 1970: Sex Fashion & Disco":** A look at the decadent world of '70s haute couture through the eyes of the dominant fashion illustrator of the era.

**"The Key to Rebecca":** British Major William Vandam is determined to capture an elusive German spy during World War II. Cliff Robertson stars. This is the first time the film has been released on DVD.

— Rick Bentley/Tribune News Service

Marcia Gay Harden plays Camile, an abusive and manipulative mother to her daughter, Esme (Emily Skeggs), who isn't as ill as she seems in the TV movie "Love You to Death." The movie, based on a true story, is told from both characters' perspective.

# Looking for the gray areas

## Harden plays complicated character in 'Love You to Death'

BY RICK BENTLEY  
Tribune News Service

It's easy to judge the incidents that inspired the Lifetime movie "Love You to Death" as extreme cruelty and abuse. It's a case of Munchausen syndrome by proxy when a mother forces her healthy young daughter to pretend she is ill so she can reap the rewards from charitable people who offer her help.

The story is based on the true story of Gypsy Rose Blanchard from Springfield, Mo.

Marcia Gay Harden ("Code Black"), who plays the abusive and manipulative mother, Camile, didn't look at the role as being good or bad. All she could see when she looked at the way the mother acted was a lot of gray areas.

"She initially thinks she is doing this out of love when she first thought her daughter was sick," Harden says. "Then, it got corroded and it became the way of life."

"My biggest question was whether or not a person who engages in that kind of behavior is aware of it or not. The answer is that when you look at crimes across history, racist people don't think they are racist. There are people all through history who are doing things that other groups of people would question whether or not what they are doing is a service to humanity."

The world sees Camile as an overly protective and caring mother to Esme

(Emily Skeggs), her wheelchair-bound daughter. It only becomes clear later that what appears to be a perfect relationship turns deadly.

"Love You to Death" tells the story from both the perspective of the mother and the daughter. Skeggs loves the structure because of her extensive theater background, where it is critical to determine just the right angle to tell the story to the audience. In the Lifetime film, she didn't have to limit herself but was able to play the characters from two very different points of view.

The varied views set up what Skeggs wants the audience to take away from the film.

"It's an extremely complicated story," Skeggs says. "You think you understand the motivations. You think if you were in those situations, you would have just told the doctor what was really happening. But it's far more complicated."

Both actors did research before the filming started with an emphasis on understanding the disorder of Munchausen syndrome by proxy. Neither Harden nor Skeggs was familiar with the condition. The acting part came easy. The Oscar-winning Harden has been working professionally since the '80s, appearing in "Sinatra" (as Ava Gardner), "Mystic River," "The Newsroom," "Fifty Shades of Grey" and "Pollock." Skeggs has appeared in "Salem" and "When We Rise."

Harden took the mother-daughter scenario beyond the work that was done in front of the cameras.

"I couldn't separate myself from Emily and I wouldn't allow her any freedom at all. When Emily would want to go to a restaurant, I would say 'What about me? Don't you think I should be there, too?' No matter what she wanted to do, I inserted myself completely," Harden says.

Skeggs explains that she interpreted all that attention as Harden being "an incredibly nurturing and generous person." Skeggs always felt well taken care of on set and in the process learned a lot from Harden about acting.

Support was crucial as working on "Love You to Death" threw both of them an acting curve having to go through some serious physical transformations. For Skeggs, that meant having no hair (to keep up the appearances of chemotherapy treatments) and being twisted into a wheelchair. Harden wore body padding to show the character's weight increase over the years. She laughs and stresses to make sure everyone knows her sagging chin is all due to prosthetics.

Putting on the faux weight helped Harden find the last pieces she needed to play the character.

"I literally couldn't access the internal of this character until I had physical part," Harden says. "I was weighted and big. It was very liberating to be in that physique, and then an emotional world began to emerge for me that I hadn't quite understood until I was carrying the burden of the weight of the people I had hurt on me."

## WEEKEND: HEALTH &amp; FITNESS

## Night owl or early bird?

Genetics could determine when a person prefers to sleep

By TOM AVRIL  
The Philadelphia Inquirer

Perhaps you are one of those peppy people who spring into action with the sunrise.

Or perhaps you find that sort of person exhausting, and you do your best work in the evening.

As with so many other human traits, genes seem to play a key role in the answer.

In a new study of 450,000 people, researchers identified 351 genetic variants that were associated with chronotype — the scientific term for when a person prefers to sleep and wake.

Individually, each variant was found to have just a slight connection with whether participants preferred the morning or evening. But collectively, the various genetic markers made an appreciable difference, the authors reported recently in *Nature Communications*. The 351 telltale snippets of DNA consisted of 24 that had been previously linked to chronotype and 327 new ones.

Some of the new findings were plausible, in that the genes in question were known to be connected to how the body regulates various hormones, while others had no apparent connection to our daily rhythms. Now comes the hard work of sorting out cause and effect, and someday determining which of the genes might be useful in diagnosis and treatment.



The study was led by researchers at the University of Exeter in England, with collaborators from the University of Pennsylvania, among other institutions. “We know from these genetic studies that some of those are going to be real, informative associations, and some of them are just random,” said coauthor Philip R. Gehrman, an associate professor in the psychiatry department at Penn’s Perelman School of Medicine. “It’s a matter of working through them and trying to figure out which ones are the meaningful ones.”

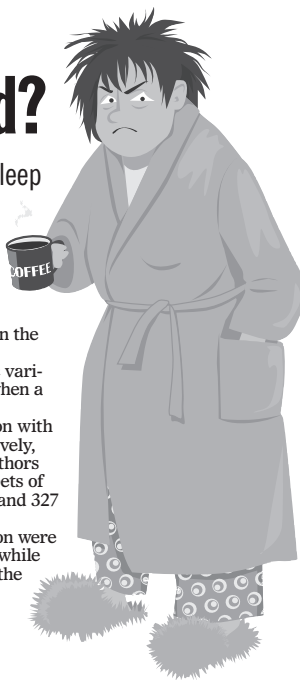
Contrary to what has been reported in some previous studies, the researchers found that night owls were no more likely than morning people to suffer from obesity or Type-2 diabetes.

The authors speculated that perhaps the true culprit in those diseases is not whether someone is a night owl, but whether there is a mismatch between a person’s work schedule and natural sleep rhythm — say, a morning person who is regularly assigned to work the graveyard shift.

The study subjects were drawn from the UK Biobank, a powerful new database of genetic and health information that has been mined for thousands of studies in just the first two years. It is unusual because of its large size and the fact that participants contributed both genetic and detailed health information.

Other researchers from Penn recently used the database to determine if brain size was connected to intelligence. (Yes, but barely.)

For the sleep study, researchers relied on



participants to identify themselves as morning or evening people, as follows:

- Definitely morning: 107,555 (23.9 percent)
- More morning than evening: 144,731 (32.2 percent)
- Don’t know: 46,538 (10.3 percent)
- More evening than morning: 115,090 (25.6 percent)
- Definitely evening: 35,818 (8 percent)

Morning preference was more common in this group than in some past studies, perhaps because the average age of study subjects was in the late 50s, said Gehrman, whose coauthors included Diego R. Mazzotti, a geneticist at Penn.

“Sometimes we can become more of a morning person as we age,” Gehrman said.

To check the validity of having participants self-identify themselves as morning or evening people, researchers directly measured the sleep cycles of a subset of 85,760 participants — giving them electronic activity monitors to wear on their wrists for a week.

Once again, the genetic evidence seemed to fit. Those having the highest numbers of genetic variants associated with self-reported “morningness” did in fact have earlier sleep-wake cycles, by 25 minutes on average, when compared with people who had the least number of those genetic variants.

People taking medication for sleep or psychiatric disorders were excluded from the study.

While there is a genetic component to sleep-wake cycles, they can be altered with therapy.

Gehrman said he sometimes treats patients who worked the night shift years ago, yet their bodies feel “stuck” on that cycle despite a shift to daytime employment.

In such cases, he often uses light therapy to get patients back on track.

## Study: Female brains remain more youthful

Why do women tend to stay mentally sharp in their later years? According to researchers at the Washington University School of Medicine, it may be that women’s brains shrink slower with age compared to men’s brains.

The university’s new study, published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, suggests women’s brains appear to be about three years younger than the brains of their male counterparts of the same chronological age.

“We’re just starting to understand how various sex-related factors might affect the trajectory of brain aging and how that might influence the vulnerability of the brain to neurodegenerative diseases,” senior author Manu Goyal, an assistant professor of radiology at the university’s Mallinckrodt Institute of Radiology, said in a news release.

The researchers note that “this study cannot separate the effects of sex — a biologically determined characteristic — from gender, which includes societal influences.”

To better understand metabolism differences between the sexes, Goyal and his team studied 205 people — 121 females and 84 males ages 20-82 — all of whom underwent PET brain scans to measure the flow of oxygen and glucose (or sugar) in their brains.

Why sugar? Well, as we age, how the brain runs on sugar changes. For example, brains of infants and children run on sugar through a process called aerobic glycolysis, which sustains brain development and maturation,” according to researchers. The remaining sugar is used for thinking and other daily tasks. By the time we reach our 60s, our brain is spending very little sugar fuel on aerobic glycolysis.

By examining participants’ PET scans, researchers were able to determine the fraction of sugar devoted to aerobic glycolysis in multiple regions of the brain.

Next, they trained a machine-learning algorithm to find the relationship between age and brain metabolism by feeding it the participants’ ages and brain metabolism data. When the algorithm calculated a female’s brain age from its metabolism, the algorithm yielded an average brain age 3.8 years younger than her chronological age. The algorithm found that male’s brains, on the other hand, were 2.4 years older than their actual age.

These results suggest that female brain notecy (or the appearance that it’s more youthful than the male brain) persists throughout adulthood. Previous research has shown evidence of less memory decline and brain atrophy in aging females compared to males. Healthy, aging females are also more likely to outperform males on cognitive tests.

Read the full study at pnas.org.

— Fiza Pirani  
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution



## WEEKEND: FAMILY



## Fears of giving up independence, facing mortality can complicate relocation discussions with elderly

By GRACIE BONDS STAPLES  
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

**A**nother year was coming to an end. Betty Tarr's husband had died, and she wasn't the woman she liked remembering.

That woman raised three independent children. She hiked for fun, volunteered in her community, cut her own grass, loaded the debris in her small Ford SUV and hauled it away.

But in 2014, Tarr, 82, was diagnosed with myasthenia gravis, a chronic autoimmune neuromuscular disease that causes weakness in the skeletal muscles. She could no longer drive. She couldn't clean her house or her yard like she used to. She found herself falling often.

Like so many of her peers, Tarr had vowed never to leave the home she'd shared with her husband.

Her reluctance wasn't all that unusual, really. The elderly make that vow every day for any number of reasons. They fear giving up their independence. They don't like confronting their own mortality.

If you've ever had to have "the talk" with your parents about why it's no longer safe for them to age in place, you know it can lead to some salty squabbles.

The Tarrs, fortunately, didn't have to have that conversation.

Betty Tarr, a retired registered nurse, had had three times already, and each of those times made the hard decision to move her father, her stepmother and a grandmother.

"I've been on both sides," she said recently. "I know how hard it is."

By the time her three children discerned it was no longer feasible for her to stay home alone, Tarr had already arrived at that realization.

"It was a blessing she was willing to talk about it," her son Sam Tarr told me.

And so two years ago, he and his siblings moved their mother from her home in Hartwell, Ga., into a Wesley Woods Senior Living community in Atlanta.

Terry Barcroft, president and CEO at Wesley Woods, has seen plenty of panicked children walk that same path.

Wesley Woods has 10 communities across North Georgia and serves 1,800 people annually. Those people aren't proactively planning their best retirement. They are moving into communities like Wesley Woods because they've experienced a significant health crisis or because it is no longer safe for them to live alone.

"It's a really big issue," Barcroft said. "So many people put that stake in the ground and say they aren't moving out of a house even when they are struggling to maintain it and are feeling isolated."

So many parents unrealistically believe they can take care of themselves for the rest of their lives; that moving to a new home is a sign of personal failure.

The truth is, it's an opportunity for them to thrive, to remain in control of their health and well-being.

"In fewer than 10 years, 1 out of

every 5 people in Georgia will be over the age of 60," said Barcroft. "You are not alone if you are going through this."

If you find yourself struggling to broach the subject of moving, Betty Tarr suggests you tread lightly.

Barcroft suggests you have the talk early and keep in mind that it might take multiple conversations to arrive at a decision. Either way, it will prevent having to make hasty decisions that do not meet your parents' needs or reflect their desires.

"The decision about where your parents or loved ones live is an important one that requires a careful, thoughtful approach," said Barcroft.

"Starting the conversation before there is a health crisis is critical for ensuring the best move possible."

When the time comes for a move, remember nothing beats a personal visit when selecting a senior living community. Beautiful surroundings don't necessarily mean quality care, so ask questions, Barcroft said.

For instance, does the community provide person-centered care?

Don't just talk with the management or admissions director. Talk to the staff and the people living there about their experience.

And don't be afraid of letting go.

"A home is not brick and mortar.

That's just a house," Barcroft said.

"A home is the memories and the relationships you bring with you."

Betty Tarr understands this perhaps better than anyone.

But she said it's really OK to look in the rearview mirror. Just don't stare.

## THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



## Survey points to cause of low military morale

**I**want to know why news reports over the past decade have indicated a steady decline in the well-being and satisfaction of military servicemembers. I don't want the same pat answer, that military families need a better quality of life. Let's dig deeper. Is there a real solution to continuing dissatisfaction?

The recently-released results of two surveys point to an interesting theory worth pursuing.

We already knew that a decade after 9/11, the public was war-weary, tired of all the bad news and growing deficit. The 2011 budget cuts known as "sequestration" arguably stemmed from a widening military-civilian divide. The drawdown took an obvious toll on morale. With alarming military suicide rates, retention and recruitment problems, and other complaints, the Pentagon passed new programs in recent years to address military spouse unemployment; restricted access to adequate childcare, housing and education; unnecessary relocations; multiple deployments; etc.

Despite these efforts, recent surveys show that morale and well-being figures are still low.

The number one key finding of the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America 2019 Survey was that 43 percent of IVA members polled in 2018 report have thought about suicide since joining the military, a 6 percent rise from 2017. An increasing number of these suicides are young servicemembers who have not been deployed or in combat.

And the 2018 Blue Star Families Military Lifestyle Survey results, released last week, identified the lack of "community connectedness and a sense of belonging" as key factors negatively affecting military families. Forty-eight percent of respondents reported not feeling a sense of belonging to their civilian community, and 43 percent felt the same about their military community. This finding was critical because "a lower sense of belonging to a community has been linked with both depression and suicide."

Blue Star Families also found low scores on military families' ability to find meaning in adversity. "[M]eaning-making is the 'lynchpin in a family's resilience response' as it enables 'more effective responses to stress.'" Although the majority of military families thrive when challenged, their resiliency hinges on whether or not they see a meaningful purpose to their struggles.

One would think that the Pentagon's recent measures to reduce hardships and increase benefits would have a positive impact on military service satisfaction, yet these survey results don't lie. Military families aren't finding meaning in service anyway, and mental illnesses and suicides are on the rise. Could the military's sense of purpose be undervalued and disconnected be a root cause?

In an article published Feb. 5, Marine veteran Jeff Groom postulates that military members' spirits are broken "[n]ot because of what they have experienced, but because of what they haven't experienced. ... [A] life deficient in community, solidarity, and shared suffering is, well, depressing."

"Congress and military leadership have gone all in on the bankrupt idea that comfort and happiness equals morale and morale correlates to readiness. In fact, they got it backward. Providing the resources and time to effectively accomplish the mission is what lifts the spirits of the troops," Groom says, and other experts agree.

Reports of a "military readiness crisis" abound. The conflict between defense budget caps and an unsustainable high operational tempo has resulted in overworked crews, inadequate training, shortage of equipment and an uptick in military air and sea accidents between 2011 and 2018.

The solution is clear. The Pentagon must prioritize the readiness crisis to give servicemembers a sense of purpose and belonging. As Groom put it, "By keeping the military comfortable, in an ironic way, our society removes their sacrifice from the altar."

Read more of Lisa Smith Molinari's columns at: [themeatandpotatoesoflife.com](http://themeatandpotatoesoflife.com)  
Email: [meatandpotatoesoflife@googlemail.com](mailto:meatandpotatoesoflife@googlemail.com)

**Top:** Betty Tarr, an independent living resident at Wesley Woods Towers in Atlanta, chats with her son Sam about a handmade dulcimer that was a gift from her late husband. She didn't wait for her children to have "the talk" with her about moving from her home in Hartwell, Ga. She knew it was no longer safe for her to live alone.

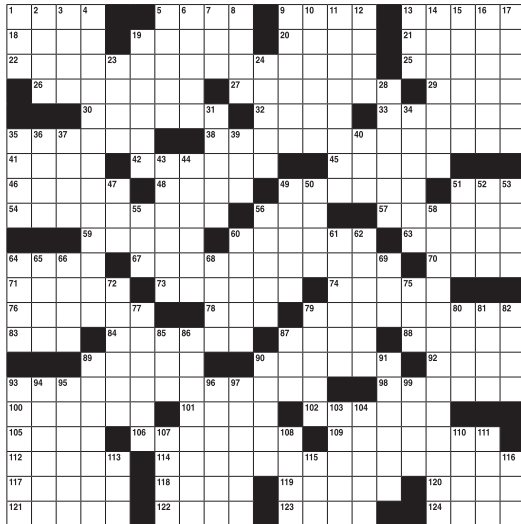
DAN CURRAN, ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION/TNS

# WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

## NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

### THAT'S A MOUTHFUL BY LEE TAYLOR / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

- ACROSS**
- 1 Parabolae, essentially
- 5 Part of a wedding 9-Across
- 9 See 5-Across
- 13 Trophy winner
- 18 He planned for a rainy day
- 19 Sled dog with a statue in Central Park
- 20 Jewish month before Nisan
- 21 Corolla part
- 22 Result of a foul on a long basketball shot
- 25 Bandleader Shaw
- 26 Start of Euripides' signature
- 27 Bargain-basement
- 29 See 92-Across
- 30 Took off the board
- 32 Popular jeans
- 33 Does, as an animated character
- 35 A, B or C, in Washington
- 38 *Albino orca*, e.g.
- 41 "You're on!" and others
- 42 Skedaddles
- 45 Country singer Chesney
- 46 "It was all \_\_\_\_"
- 48 Chops down
- 49 Places for toasters and roasters
- 51 Word after "sister or bunny"
- 54 Subjects of some New Year's resolutions
- 56 Deli order
- 59 When repeated, emergency cry to a fighter pilot
- 60 Wise-looking
- 63 Pub orders
- 64 On base, say
- 67 Part of a department store where people sit
- 70 Legally confer, as a power
- 71 Opulent
- 73 Kind of joke
- 74 Lilac color
- 76 High regard
- 78 Certain intersection
- 79 Andrew Jackson's Tennessee home, with "the" signature
- 83 Family-reunion attendee, informally
- 84 One taking inventory?
- 87 \_\_\_\_ Pueblo (World Heritage Site)
- 88 Politic
- 89 Expensive outing
- 90 Philadelphia art museum, with "the"
- 92 With 29-Across, source of a famous smile
- 93 Home of the world's only 14-lane suspension bridge
- 98 "Atonement" author
- 100 Old barracks decorations
- 101 Catches up to
- 102 Bollywood instruments
- 105 Man Ray's genre
- 106 Ham it up
- 109 Wine orders
- 112 Good servers
- 114 *Timekeeper on the Emerald Isle*
- 117 "Free \_\_\_\_"
- 118 Text-message status
- 119 Assistants in a way one shouldn't
- 120 One getting the red-carpet treatment
- 121 Diary passage
- 122 Avant-garde
- 123 Father
- 124 Scottish caps
- DOWN**
- 1 Hill and tunnel builder
- 2 Architect
- 3 Miss van der \_\_\_\_
- 3 Complain
- 4 What a *dear* madam does all day long
- 5 Poi plants
- 6 Chaiken who co-created "The L. Word"
- 7 Printemps follower
- 8 Source of a deferment in the 1960s draft
- 9 Syndicate
- 10 Big fan
- 11 Yamaha competitor
- 12 Formerly, once
- 13 Figurehead?
- 14 Tim \_\_\_\_ frequent collaborator with Adam Sandler
- 15 Ancient Greek state with Athens
- 16 "The Marvelous Mrs. \_\_\_\_" (award-winning Amazon series)
- 17 "I beg of you"
- 19 A sharps
- 23 Aer Lingus destination
- 24 Performances for Hawaii tourists
- 28 Plane, e.g.
- 31 Column in soccer standings
- 34 Confesses
- 35 Picket line crosser
- 36 Hobbes's favorite food in "Calvin and Hobbes"
- 37 Text-message status
- 39 Leading characters in "Mad Max"
- 40 Matter in court
- 43 Pretentious
- 44 1984 Olympic gymnastics sensation
- 47 \_\_\_\_ Boston (noted hotel)
- 49 \_\_\_\_ de leche
- 50 Somewhat
- 51 Put an edge on
- 52 Loopholes
- 53 "Hey you!"
- 55 Writer Siegfried Larson, e.g.
- 58 Hard way to say the answers to the italicized clues in this puzzle (good luck!)
- 60 Willow twig
- 61 San \_\_\_\_ Calif.
- 62 Having a frog in one's throat
- 64 Building direction, briefly
- 65 What "btw" means
- 66 Mess (with)
- 68 Spanish direction



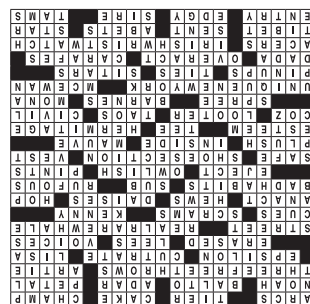
- 69 Book before Deut.
- 72 Extend a hand to after a fall, say
- 75 London's Old \_\_\_\_
- 77 Beyond that
- 79 Listens attentively
- 80 Declare
- 81 "Jane the Virgin" actress Rodriguez
- 82 Pizzaz
- 85 Wine: Prefix
- 86 Was on the verge of collapse
- 87 What "light" cigarettes are lower in
- 89 Not so big
- 90 "The Garden of Earthly Delights" painter
- 91 Cleverness
- 93 App release
- 94 One of the B vitamins
- 95 Underwater
- 96 Electrician's concern
- 97 Like the smell of some bread
- 99 Where something annoying might be stuck
- 103 Less welcoming
- 104 Sample
- 107 What a headache might feel like
- 108 Start of a classic Christmas poem
- 110 James of jazz
- 111 Ponzi scheme, e.g.
- 113 Wilbur's home in "Charlotte's Web"
- 115 Box-score initials
- 116 Time-sheet units: Abbr.

## GUNSTON STREET



"Gunston Street" is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com. Online: gunstonstreet.com.

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## FACES

# Ryan Adams denies multiple accusations

By AUGUST BROWN  
Los Angeles Times

Multiple women, including several high-profile musical collaborators and at least one then-underage fan, have accused the singer-songwriter Ryan Adams of sexual misconduct and abusive behavior.

Speaking to The New York Times, Adams' ex-wife Mandy Moore, singer-songwriter Phoebe Bridgers, and a now-20-year-old fan who reported to have exchanged sexually explicit messages with Adams as a minor, are among those who say that he engaged in a years-long pattern of promising professional advancement in music alongside sexual advances, only to turn manipulative and abusive.

He denied all claims to The New York Times via a lawyer.

That newspaper reported that it examined years of messages between Adams and the underage fan (referred to as "Ava" in the story) and uncovered many sexually explicit messages in which Adams acknowledged his fear of being discovered.

"If people knew they would say I was like R Kelley lol," he allegedly wrote in one, when he was 40 years old and Ava was 16. "And tell me that your mom is not gonna kill me if she finds out we even text," he allegedly wrote in another.

Ava was one of several female artists in the story who claim that Adams' mix of fame and promises of professional help led to manipulative sexually charged relationships that thwarted their music careers.

High-profile artists levied similar accusations. The singer-songwriter Bridgers released some of her earliest music on Adams' Pax-Am label, affiliated with the major label Capitol. She told The New York Times that "(t)here was a mythology around him ... it seemed like he had the power to propel people forward." They began a romantic relationship that, Bridgers said, soon turned dark and emotionally manipulative, with Adams threatening professional retaliation.

Moore, an actor and musician, described similar treatment during their relationship. "What you experience with him — the treatment, the destructive, manic sort of back and forth behavior — feels so exclusive," she told the paper. "You feel like there's no way other people have been treated like this."

Adams further denied the accusations on Wednesday via multiple posts on Twitter, writing that "I am not a perfect man and I have made many mistakes. To anyone I have ever hurt, however unintentionally, I apologize deeply and unreservedly ... But the picture that this article paints is upsettingly inaccurate. Some of its details are misrepresented; some are exaggerated; some are outright false. I would never have inappropriate interactions with someone I thought was underage. Period."

Adams' lawyer Andrew B. Brettler told the paper that "Mr. Adams unequivocally denies that he ever engaged in inappropriate online sexual communications with someone he knew was underage" and described the other allegations as "grousing by disgruntled individuals."



## Smollett: 'Ridiculous' he would lie about attack

From wire services

"Empire" actor Jussie Smollett is responding to critics who question his report about being attacked in downtown Chicago last month.

Smollett told police two masked men shouted racial and homophobic slurs at him, attacked him and put a rope around his neck early on Jan. 29. The 36-year-old actor is black and openly gay.

Smollett tells ABC News it's "ridiculous" to think he'd lie in his explanation for being outside at 2 a.m. in frigid Chicago weather.

He says he left the rope and clothes on when police arrived "because I wanted them to see." He says accusations that the attack was a date gone bad are offensive.

No arrests have been made. Police say they've not found surveillance video that shows the attack, but that the investigation is ongoing.

## Film academy responds to backlash

Responding to widespread backlash to the fact that four Oscars will be presented during commercial breaks at the 91st Academy Awards, the film academy has issued a statement saying that all Academy Award winners will still be included in the broadcast on Feb. 24.

A joint statement from the film academy's board of governors on Wednesday criticized "inaccurate reporting" and social media posts for what they described as a "chain of misinformation" that has angered film academy members. Critics of the changes include directors Alfonso Cuarón, Spike Lee and Martin Scorsese.

The cinematography, film editing, makeup and hairstyling and live-action shorts awards will be presented during the commercial breaks this year in an effort to shorten the broadcast to three hours. Their speeches will be edited into the show.

## Other news

■ The Nouveau Empire reports that two Los Angeles-based producers are planning an eight-episode anthology series called "Sitka." Producer Helena Sardinha says the show would be fictional, but she hopes it will capture a realist in portrayals of the Alaskan city and its people.

■ "Queen Eye" will return for its third season on March 15, Netflix announced Wednesday. The third season of the Emmy-winning reality show, in which five gay men compete in personality games for a week to help them make a few improvements to their home, wardrobe and self-esteem, will take place in Kansas City, Mo.

■ Betty Ballantine, half of a groundbreaking husband-and-wife publishing team that helped invent the modern paperback, died Tuesday. She was 99.



Donald Glover



Aziz Ansari



Lopez and Robinson



Constance Wu

## Donald Glover gets 5 NAACP Image noms

Coming off a big night at the Grammys, Donald Glover and his alter-ego Childish Gambino was nominated Wednesday for five NAACP Image Awards.

Glover is nominated for his acting and directing on "Atlanta." The FX show itself is nominated for best comedy series. On the music side, Childish Gambino is nominated for top male performer, and his song "This Is America" is nominated for best video and song. Glover won four Grammys including record and song of the year on Sunday night.

The nominees were announced Wednesday.

"Black Panther" was nominated for 14 awards. The ceremony will be held March 30 and aired live on TV One.

## Ansari discusses sexual misconduct allegation

Comedian Aziz Ansari reportedly reflected on how the sexual misconduct allegation made against him last year has changed him during a performance this week at a New York City venue. Ansari, 35, called the topic a "terrifying thing to talk about" during his set Monday night, Vulture reported.

"There were times I felt really upset and humiliated and embarrassed and ultimately I just felt terrible this person felt this way," Ansari said. "But you know, after a year, how I feel about it is, I hope it was a step forward. It made me think about a lot, and I hope I've become a better person."

Ansari said at the time that he believed the encounter was consensual.

## Robinson responds to Motown tribute critics

Smokey Robinson is fired up about the naysayers of Jennifer Lopez's Motown tribute at the Grammys.

Robinson, took part in the performance alongside J. Lo, defended the pop star amid complaints from some viewers who believe the award show should have gone with black artists to perform the tribute instead.

In an Instagram post Tuesday, Robinson said Motown was about breaking racial barriers.

"So now you're gonna try to diminish the scope of Motown and narrow it down to just music for Black people and you call yourself defending the image of Motown," he wrote. "Well you're trying to set us back a hundred years."

## People magazine names the most stylish stars

People magazine released its list of Hollywood's most stylish stars on Wednesday.

The magazine calls Lupita Nyong'o a trailblazing beauty and Emma Stone the modern romantic. Nicole Kidman is the elegant icon, Emily Blunt the queen of whimsy and Tracee Ellis Ross is considered avant-garde. "Crazy Rich Asians" actress Constance Wu is the fresh face, and Julia Roberts has mastered the "less-is-more approach."

As for men, Timothee Chalamet is considered a trendsetter. Donald Glover's style is throwback while Jeff Goldblum's is eccentric. People magazine calls Henry Golding the gentleman.

From wire reports



## OPINION

Gary Abernathy, a contributing columnist for The Washington Post, is a freelance writer and former newspaper editor based in Hillsboro, Ohio.

# OPINION

## What newspapers are saying at home

The following editorial excerpts are selected from a cross section of newspapers throughout the United States. The editorials are provided by The Associated Press and other stateside syndicates.

### Chapter and verse on Trump notable for its sheer volume

**USA Today**  
President Donald Trump likes to say that he hires only the best people and that his White House operates like a well-oiled machine.

But a steady stream of insider accounts flowing out of the West Wing suggests there's more madness than method to the president and his administration.

The most recent entries are two books that just hit best-seller lists, one by former White House aide Cliff Sims, the other by ex-New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, a one-time Trump adviser.

Sims dishes about Oval Office back-sitting and his exasperation after seeing Vice President Mike Pence's "Let Me Finish" laments Trump's choice of "amateurs, grifters, weaklings, convicted and unconvicted felons ... hustled into jobs they were never suited for."

The authors join a pantheon of disgruntled insiders who, on Twitter or in staffed tellings tales of incompetence at the highest executive levels. Last week, someone handed Axios three months of Trump's daily schedule, revealing in mortifying detail how the president spends more than half of his workday in "executive time" activities such as watching TV, tweeting and making calls.

The consistent and growing evidence of internal dysfunction is growing increasingly difficult to ignore or explain away. Remember, these accounts aren't coming from Democrats or anti-Trump pundits. They're from people who have worked inside the administration and seen White House operations up close and personal.

■ A senior Trump administration official, writing an anonymous column in The New York Times, characterized the president as "impetuous, adversarial, petty and ineffective," with decisions that are half-baked, ill-informed and occasionally reckless.

■ Journalist Bob Woodward, in his best-selling book "Fear," diagnosed a White House suffering a "nervous breakdown," with aides stealing papers off Trump's desk to deter bad policy. Former Chief of Staff John Kelly was quoted as saying, "We're in Crazytown."

■ "Fire and Fury" by writer Michael Wolff and "Unhinged" by Omarosa Manigault Newman, the ex-White House aide and former reality television star, questioned the president's mental well-being.

Spilled throughout these tell-all tomes are unflattering assessments of the president by some of his top-drawer executives. Ex-Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, according to Woodward, said Trump comprehends like a "fifth- or sixth-grader." And former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has never denied multiple reports that he laid out "mild" criticism to the president.

Trump and his supporters have questioned the credibility of some writers, or dismissed their accounts as sour grapes. But you have to wonder how so many aides who were hailed as brilliant choices on their way into the administration suddenly found themselves incompetent hacks on their way out.

With more books in the pipeline, the Trump campaign is eager to try to enforce nondisclosure agreements signed by ex-staffers. What doesn't the White House want the public to know?

People who've served inside the Trump administration keep trying to warn the



world that something is terribly awry. Americans ignore them at their peril.

### Top 2 Va. officials' comments don't explain their situations

**The Washington Post**

Neither Gov. Ralph Northam nor Lt. Gov. Justin Fairfax, each embroiled in scandal, gives any indication they are considering leaving office despite the broad consensus of Virginia's political establishment that they should do so. That doesn't absolve the two Democrats of the obligation to address unanswered questions. To the contrary, the need is all the more urgent given that they have shaken the trust of even many ardent supporters.

For Northam, who spun heads by denying he'd appeared in a racist yearbook photograph less than 24 hours after admitting it, the questions mainly concern his credibility. How does he intend to repair it?

In the days after the damning photo surfaced, and following the disastrous news conference in which he made a hash of trying to explain it, the governor's aides let it be known that he planned to hire a private investigator to get to the bottom of the image's provenance. Fine, but there has been no further word from Northam on that — although he did hire a D.C. crisis management agency. Eastern Virginia Medical School, in whose 1984 yearbook the photo appeared, has undertaken its own inquiry, led by a former Virginia attorney general, Richard Cullen.

But it is primarily the governor's responsibility to explain. If neither of the figures in the photo is the governor, how and why did it land on his medical school yearbook page? There has been no adequate account of that, nor of why Northam's nickname as an undergraduate at Virginia Military Institute was "Cooanman." Who coined that appellation, and why?

The questions for Fairfax arise in part from his intemperate responses to accusations by two women that he sexually assaulted them. He has referred to the accusations as a "smear" and called them a "coordinated" conspiracy against him, while dismissing as "demonstrably false" the allegation by the second accused, Meredith Watson, that he raped her while both were undergraduates at Duke University in 2000.

Fairfax, a lawyer and former federal prosecutor, understands the meaning of words. So on what does he base his assertion that the accusations against him are "coordinated"? And if the rape allegation is "demonstrably" untrue, as he said, in what way can he demonstrate it? And if he really believes the two women have invented spurious stories to "smear" him, why does he think they would do that?

Fairfax has also said his encounters with

both Watson and another woman, Vanessa Tyson, now a college professor, were "consensual." As Washington Post columnist Karen Tumulty has asked, how did he draw that conclusion?

Northam and Fairfax may believe they can weather the storm by holding tight and uttering platitudes about reconciliation and respect. The reality is that there are facial issues to be addressed. Both men had better address them, if they can. If they do not or cannot, their remaining terms in office, nearly three years, will be irreparably impaired.

### Progress a year after Fla. school massacre must expand Tampa Bay (Fla.) Times

Florida has been forever changed by the massacre at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland. In the 12 months since 17 people were killed by a troubled former student firing a semi-automatic assault rifle, there have been modest new gun controls, enhanced security at schools and an increase in civic activism by young people. The challenge on the one-year anniversary of the shooting is to remain focused on meaningful changes to make our schools and communities safer — and for Floridians of all ages to remain involved in the discussion.

To their credit, then-Gov. Rick Scott and the Florida Legislature reacted with remarkable speed following the shooting. Within three weeks, a new law raised the age to buy all guns from 18 to 21, applied the three-day waiting period for buying handguns to rifles and outlawed bump stocks that have been used in other mass shootings and enable guns to fire more rapidly. Florida became one of a handful of states to establish a red flag law that enables law enforcement to seek a court order to take away guns from people who are a threat to themselves or others. Schools are being hardened, and at least one armed guard is required now at every school.

Yet there is much more to be done. A state commission chaired by Pinellas Sheriff Bob Gualtieri recommends increased background security assessments, are included in legislation passed Tuesday by the Senate Education Committee. In the meantime, many school districts have to step up their efforts to comply with the requirement that every school have behavioral threat assessment teams to identify students showing concerning behavior.

If the Florida Legislature was less be-

holden to the National Rifle Association, it would take more aggressive measures. It would expand the red flag law to empower family members, not just law enforcement officers, to ask a judge to take firearms away from someone who is a danger to themselves or others. It would close the so-called gun show loophole so every gun sale would require a background check. It would ban semi-automatic weapons like those used at Stoneman Douglas and the Pulse nightclub in Orlando. Of course, that is not likely to happen in Tallahassee until voters send more gun control advocates to the Legislature.

What really shouldn't happen is allowing some classroom teachers to carry guns, no matter how well they are screened or how much training they receive. The commission chaired by Gualtieri supports that change, and so do Gov. Ron DeSantis and key Republican legislators. Gualtieri, who changed his thinking during the commission's study, suggests at least one teacher would have shot and stopped the Stoneman Douglas shooter if he had been armed.

But the commission also documented a series of systemic failures. The school district mishandled Nikolas Cruz's issues over a long period. Campus monitors at Stoneman Douglas failed to sound the alarm when Cruz walked on campus carrying a gun. And some campus security officers failed to immediately enter the building after Cruz started shooting. More guns in schools is not the answer.

Ultimately, school safety is about money. The Florida Legislature should continue to invest in mental health services, better communications systems, within schools and housing campuses. If there is a compelling need for more armed security, the state should provide school districts with enough money to hire more police officers or licensed security guards with law enforcement backgrounds.

### El Chapo earned comparison to Capone, shares his fate

**Chicago Tribune**

El Chapo's murderous Sinaloa drug cartel was based in Mexico, but for years its American nerve center was Chicago. His henchmen from the Little Village neighborhood, twin brothers Pedro and Margarito Flores, turned the city into a conduit for as much as 1,500 kilos of cocaine and heroin each month that would be distributed throughout the U.S. and Canada. Often, drugs sent to American cities were stashed behind fake walls or in crates of frozen fish or avocados shipped in boxcars and tractor-trailers.

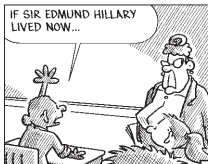
The twins from Chicago were business partners with the notorious drug kingpin Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, but they also were his undoing. They flipped on him, secretly recording him and other cartel members. "Amigo!" Guzman said to one of the Flores brothers in Chicago in a recording of an intercepted phone call. "Here at your service."

Once atop a drug smuggling operation that spanned four continents, Guzman, 61, now faces spending the rest of his life in prison after his conviction Tuesday in a Brooklyn federal court. The 5'4-inch kingpin's "bloody reign," said Richard Donaghy, U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of New York, "has come to an end, and the myth that he could not be brought to justice has been laid to rest."

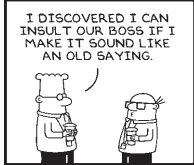
A declaration universally welcomed, but particularly in this city. A share of those drug shipments that came through Chicago stayed in Chicago. El Chapo's evil streaked street violence and ruined the lives of countless young here.

In 2013, the Chicago Crime Commission branded Guzman "Public Enemy No.1," a designation the commission had used just once before — for Al Capone. His fate sealed, Guzman now can do a different number of years in prison, the kind, that comes with an orange jumpsuit.

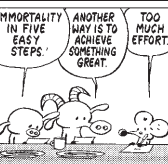
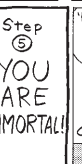
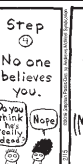
Frazz



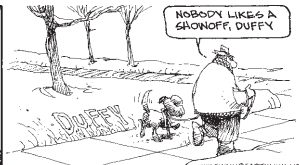
Dilbert



Pearls Before Swine



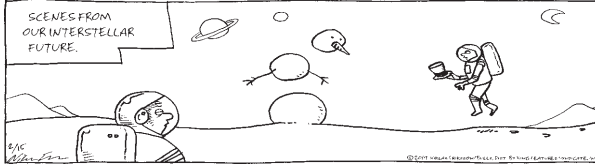
Non Sequitur



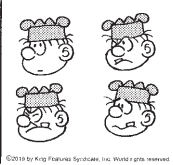
Candorville



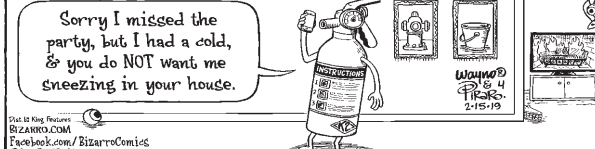
Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



# Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12							13		14	
15							16		17	
		18			19			20		
21	22			23				24		
25			26		27		28			
29			30			31		32	33	34
		35			36			37		
38	39	40			41		42		43	
44				45				46		
47				48			49		50	51
52				53				54		
55				56				57		

## ACROSS

- 1 Sparkle
- 6 Word of denial
- 9 Early hrs.
- 12 — Carta
- 13 Japanese sash
- 14 Like sashimi
- 15 Surrounded by
- 16 Italian city where Marconi was born
- 18 Mexican entree
- 20 Optimistic
- 21 Honey holder
- 23 Jurist Fortas
- 24 De Mile of dance
- 25 Nepal's continent
- 27 Bakery lure
- 29 Italian port city
- 31 Italian city of canals
- 35 Soft leather
- 37 Pack cargo
- 38 Grinding tooth
- 41 Genetic letters
- 43 Storm center
- 44 Oil cartel
- 45 Pippa, to Kate Middleton
- 47 Italian city on the Adriatic
- 49 October birthstones
- 52 Crono
- 53 — de deux
- 54 "— Be" (The Beatles)

## DOWN

- 1 "Today" rival, briefly
- 2 Felon's flight
- 3 Self-indulgent "journey"
- 4 "— Karenina"
- 5 Igneous rock source
- 6 More altruistic
- 7 Bassoon's kin
- 8 Up to
- 9 Inert gas
- 10 Parson's home
- 11 Convinces
- 17 Church keyboards
- 19 Humiliate
- 21 Painter Vermeer
- 22 Simile part
- 24 Soul, to Sartre
- 26 — -Lorraine
- 28 Pizza cooks
- 30 Where Lux, is
- 32 State repeatedly
- 33 Coquettish
- 34 Ram's mate
- 36 Most desert-like
- 38 Flutter insects
- 39 Media mogul
- 40 Janet of "Psycho"
- 42 Coral reef
- 45 Flag feature
- 46 Duel tool
- 48 Hot tub
- 50 Cover
- 51 Rds.

## Answer to Previous Puzzle

R	O	M	A	B	O	P	S	T	A	B
S	L	I	M	A	W	L	P	U	C	E
V	I	N	O	C	E	O	A	R	I	D
P	O	D	U	N	K	P	A	R	A	D
			N	O	R		S	S	N	
R	A	P	T	O	N	T	H	E	D	O
I	D	O	A	C	E	O	R	O		
G	A	L	G	A	D	O	T	S	T	A
			K	E	G		H	O	T	
C	H	A	L	E	T		E	X	I	L
A	I	D	A		H	A	R	F	E	T
S	P	O	T		R	Y	E		F	A
A	S	T	I		U	N	D		S	H

2-15

## CRYPTOQUIP

YRHMPIFOK PISP HSOX KRRW

URBSDFYPY SOW NSYMNSDD

ADSXMEY ISUM FO BRHHRO:

NMFOK AFPBI-AMEVMBP.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: OLD NOAH WEBSTER WAS A CRITICALLY IMPORTANT PUBLIC FIGURE. HE'S A DEFINING NAME IN HISTORY.

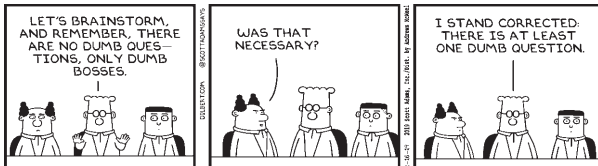
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: Y equals S



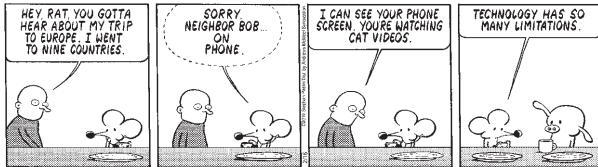
Frazz



Dilbert



Pearls Before Swine



Non Sequitur



Candorville



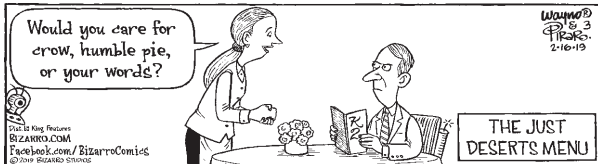
Carpe Diem



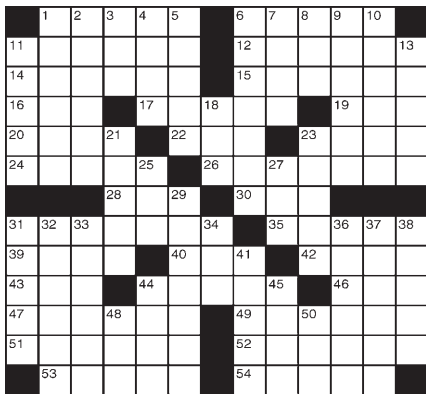
Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



## Eugene Sheffer Crossword



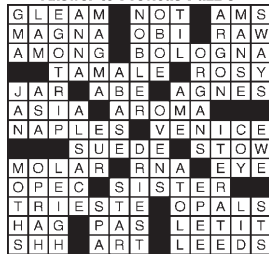
### ACROSS

- 1 Russian range
- 6 First lady before Michelle
- 11 Salem's state
- 12 Cancels
- 14 Mexican revolutionary
- 15 "Are you happy I'm back?"
- 16 Low digit
- 17 Omits
- 19 Soak (up)
- 20 1492 vessel
- 22 Rock's Brian
- 23 Spanish ayes
- 24 Devour
- 26 Religious doctrines
- 28 — Moines
- 30 Actress Long
- 31 Fairly shared
- 35 Snare
- 39 "— Smile Be Your Umbrella"
- 40 Director
- 42 Half a sextet
- 43 Egg (Pref.)
- 44 Pale purple
- 46 Club —
- 47 "New World Symphony" composer
- 49 Recital piece
- 51 Bagel choice
- 52 Handsome guy

### DOWN

- 53 Hinder
- 54 Classical language
- 23 Brainy
- 25 Pod dweller
- 27 "Shoo!"
- 29 Picket-line participant
- 31 Trudges
- 32 Gunned, as an engine
- 33 Idle
- 34 "You've got mail" co.
- 36 Designer
- 37 Bakery pan
- 38 Fizzy drinks
- 41 Twangy
- 44 Hobbling
- 45 Musical finale
- 48 Squealer
- 50 "Kidding!"

### Answer to Previous Puzzle



2-16

### CRYPTOQUIP

JAYF E TEWF CMEP UYITU  
MPPVD YVEUBWN EFP  
UQCWFSD, AMJ NMZVP DMZ  
PUNFCWHY WB? AWSAJED  
CZHYYCD.

Yesterday's Cryptquip: SOMETHING THAT MANY GOOD VOCALISTS AND BASEBALL PLAYERS HAVE IN COMMON: BEING PITCH-PERFECT.

Today's Cryptquip Clue: P equals D

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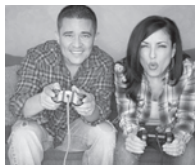
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Daily Newspaper of U.S. Armed Forces

in the European Theater of Operations

Vol. 1—No. 241

1 Fr.

1 Fr.

Sunday, March 25, 1945

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## NHL

## Scoreboard

## Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division							
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Tampa Bay	57	42	11	4	88	223	159
Toronto	56	35	18	3	73	200	159
Boston	57	32	17	8	72	168	148
Montreal	56	31	18	7	69	172	162
Buffalo	56	28	21	7	63	165	171
Florida	55	23	24	8	54	168	192
Detroit	57	22	28	7	51	159	188
Ottawa	56	21	30	5	47	173	205

Ottawa	56	21	30	3	47	173	203
Metropolitan Division							
N.Y. Islanders	56	33	17	6	72	161	136
Washington	57	31	19	7	69	192	183
Columbus	55	32	20	3	67	180	167
Pittsburgh	57	30	20	7	67	196	174
Carolina	57	29	22	6	64	167	164
Philadelphia	57	26	24	7	59	167	180
N.Y. Rangers	56	24	24	8	56	159	186
New Jersey	56	21	27	8	50	162	194

## Western Conference

	Central Division				Pts	GF	GA
	GP	W	L	OT			
Winnipeg	57	36	18	3	75	198	163
Nashville	59	33	21	5	71	182	154
Dallas	56	29	22	5	63	145	140
St. Louis	55	28	22	5	61	163	162
Minnesota	57	27	25	5	59	160	167
Colorado	56	22	23	11	55	182	188
Chicago	57	23	26	9	56	185	209
	Pacific Division						
San Jose	57	34	16	7	75	210	177
Calgary	56	34	16	6	74	205	167
Vegas	58	31	23	4	66	172	162
Vancouver	58	25	26	7	57	164	182
Arizona	56	25	26	5	55	150	163
Edmonton	56	24	27	5	53	160	187
Anaheim	57	22	26	9	53	128	182

**North** Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division and the wild card per conference advance to playoffs.

**Tuesday's games**

Columbus 3, Washington 0  
Buffalo 3, N.Y. Islanders 1  
Dallas 3, Florida 0  
Boston 6, Chicago 3  
Tampa Bay 6, Calgary 3  
Carolina 4, Ottawa 1  
Philadelphia 5, Minnesota 4  
Winnipeg 4, N.Y. Rangers 3  
St. Louis 8, New Jersey 3  
Detroit 3, Nashville 2  
Toronto 5, Colorado 2  
Arizona 5, Vegas 2

**Wednesday's games**  
Pittsburgh at Edmonton  
Anaheim at Vancouver

**Thursday's games**  
New Jersey at Columbus  
Dallas at Tampa Bay  
Colorado at Winnipeg  
Montreal at Nashville  
New Jersey at Chicago  
St. Louis at Arizona  
Toronto at Vegas  
Vancouver at Los Angeles  
Washington at San Jose

**Friday's games**  
N.Y. Rangers at Buffalo  
Edmonton at Carolina  
Boston at Minnesota  
Boston at Anaheim

**Saturday's games**  
Calgary at Pittsburgh  
Detroit at Philadelphia  
St. Louis at Colorado  
Toronto at Arizona  
Ottawa at Winnipeg  
Edmonton at N.Y. Islanders  
Montreal at Tampa Bay  
Dallas at Carolina  
Columbus at Chicago  
Vancouver at San Jose  
Nashville at Los Angeles  
San Jose at Vegas

**Sunday's games**  
N.Y. Rangers at Pittsburgh  
St. Louis at Minnesota  
Buffalo at New Jersey  
Philadelphia at Detroit  
Montreal at Florida  
Washington at Anaheim

## Leaders

Goal scoring		GP	G
Name, Team			
Alex Ovechkin, Washington	56	38	
Jeff Skinner, Buffalo	56	34	
Leon Draisaitl, Edmonton	56	33	
Patrick Kane, Chicago	56	33	
Bradley Point, Tampa Bay	56	33	
John Tavares, Toronto	56	33	
Sam Atkinson, Columbus	53	31	
Connor McDavid, Edmonton	55	31	
David Pastrnak, Boston	56	31	
Joe Pavelski, San Jose	57	30	
Mark Scheifele, Winnipeg	57	30	
Steven Stamkos, Tampa Bay	57	30	
Alex DeBrincat, Chicago	57	29	
Johnny Gaudreau, Calgary	56	29	
Nathan Landeskog, Colorado	56	29	
Patrick Marleau, San Jose	56	29	
Sean Monahan, Calgary	56	29	

Plus/Minus		GP	+/-
Name, Team			
Brian Dumoulin, Pittsburgh	57	29	
Mark Giordano, Calgary	54	28	
Ron Hainsey, Toronto	56	26	
T.J. Brodie, Calgary	56	25	
Elias Lindholm, Calgary	56	25	
Mikael Backlund, Calgary	52	24	
Nick Bonino, Nashville	58	24	
Mattias Ekholm, Nashville	58	24	
Morgan Rielly, Toronto	56	24	
Colton Sissons, Nashville	52	24	
Ryan McDonagh, Tampa Bay	57	23	
Ryan O'Reilly, St. Louis	55	23	
Brenden Dillon, San Jose	57	22	
Phillip Danault, Montreal	56	21	
Tuovo Teravainen, Carolina	57	21	
Andreas Johansson, Toronto	50	20	

## Around the league

## Ready for the unpredictable

## Goaltenders have to be prepared for pucks that seem to have eyes

By TERESA M. WALKER  
Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. NHL goaltenders prepare for the unpredictable, ready for pucks deflecting off sticks, bodies, feet or a divot in the ice, past all the gear designed to help defend their net.

The freaky, fluky or simply weird goals can be laughed off by goalies who know sometimes the puck just takes a funny bounce.

The goals that eat at a goalie are those he believes he could've — and should've — stopped. Not the goal allowed by Dallas goalie Anton Khudobin where the puck bounced off a Nashville forward's back and over the net before hitting the back of the goalie's helmet, then off his back and into the net.

"It stings anytime you give up a goal," Predators goalie Pekka Rinne said Tuesday. "That kind of goal, there's nothing really he could've done. It's a freaky goal, and I feel like those things may happen once, twice in a season. But yeah, the ones that hurt the most as a goalie, it's the ones that you feel like you should've had it."

Stick-handling in the NHL has improved right along with players' speed and skating, thanks to offseason workouts. That also has boosted the creativity for shooters looking to do a bit more than a simple slap shot, wrist or snap shot.

"There's a lot of talent in the league, more maybe so now than there has been in years past," Colorado captain Gabriel Landeskog said. "These young guys coming up, everybody has their own skills coaches and things like that. There's a lot of skills. I don't doubt there's more highlight-reel goals."

Goaltenders have to be ready for the next move dreamed up by the league's stars to put the puck over the line. Scoring is up with the average number of goals scored per game increasing in each of the past four seasons, and the current average of 3.06 goals per game is on pace to be the highest since the 2005-06 season, according to Hockey-Reference.com.

"Maybe it's the skill of the players, too, finding that one spot," Colorado goalie Philipp Grubauer said. "(Evgeny) Kuznetsov in Washington, he's so sneaky in terms of what he wants to do and doesn't want to. He puts the puck in spots. Maybe you get a weird bounce, hit a guy's shin pad or something like that."

The NHL also keeps downsiz-

ing goaltenders' pads, most recently chest protectors. Grubauer sees teams also changing how they break out on offense, attacking faster and giving goalies less time.

"Back in the days, you always used to go back and regroup and break out as a unit," Grubauer said. "I feel like the last couple of years, it's always like, (snaps fingers) and up (snaps fingers) and up."

Sometimes goalies get lucky, too.

Buffalo goalie Carter Hutton appeared to be losing his balance Sunday in the first period against Winnipeg with Adam Lowry coming in on a short-handed breakaway. Hutton put his glove down at the exact moment Lowry tried to slip the puck between the goalie's legs for the save.

"You definitely get some fluky saves where you're beat and a guy just hits you," Hutton said.

The Sabres goalie also recalls being on his goal line when the puck came off, rolled under the top of the net, hit his neck and went in. He had another puck slip past him on a penalty shot in December against Florida.

"You make the initial save, and it lands on my pads sideways and just slowly rolls off," Hutton said.

"That's one where if it's during a game, a D-man's probably there to stop it or that puck lands flat on my pad and doesn't go in. It's unfortunate that it lands sideways and rolls off my pad. So that's one that I would say this year that's been fluky."

There's one goal so weird it's called the Butt Goal.



BYRON ANDERSON/AP

Dallas Stars goaltender Anton Khudobin keeps his eye on the puck during Tuesday's game against the Panthers in Sunrise, Fla.

Defenseman Mark Pysyk, now with Florida, got his first goal of the 2013 season right before Christmas in overtime after jamming at the puck, sending it into the air and into the pants of Coyotes goalie Mike Smith, who then backed into his own net.

"I didn't think they would call it a goal, because I didn't think they'd see it, but they did," Pysyk said. "It was in his pants and he backed in. I think you could see me point at it. They counted it a little bit after, obviously, so I didn't have a chance to celebrate normally. It was pretty funny."

## Surprising Islanders

The New York Islanders are

atop the Metropolitan Division in coach Barry Trotz's first season despite losing John Tavares last offseason to Toronto. They just snapped a three-game streak Tuesday night with a 3-1 loss in Buffalo but are 6-2-2 in their last 10 games and remain second overall in the Eastern Conference.

To Buffalo coach Phil Housley, credit Trotz for using the same philosophy and structure from coaching in Nashville and winning the Stanley Cup with Washington last summer.

"I really had a pleasure to work with him for one year and learned a lot from him," Housley said. "You can see he's had success wherever he's went."

## Rivalry series

The best of women's hockey are back at it this week with the United States and Canada playing each other in a rare three-game "Rivalry Series" that ends Sunday in Detroit at the home of the Red Wings. The U.S. beat Canada nearly a year ago for Olympic gold and then won a fourth straight Four Nations Cup title last November. Kendall Coyne Schofield will be the U.S. captain for the series, which will be aired on NHL Network.

"That's something we've been fighting for, is more chances for us to play against Canada," U.S. forward Dani Cameranesi said. "It's not that often that we get to play at the highest level. We don't really have that many chances for that, but for them all to be ... on NHL Network, too, and for us to get coverage on that is a really big deal."

AP Hockey Writer John Sawrow, AP Sports Writer Pat Graham and AP freelance Writer Paul Gereffi contributed to this report.



JEFFREY T. BARNES/AP

While every goalie gives up unpredictable goals, Buffalo Sabres goalie Carter Hutton says they also make some unpredictable saves.



## COLLEGE BASEBALL

## Beavers' Bailey says there's no pressure

Interim coach looks to keep defending national champion Oregon State on top

By ERIC OLSON  
Associated Press

Oregon State has won 111 of its last 130 baseball games, is coming off its third national championship since 2006 and its career coaching wins leader Pat Casey retired last fall.

Enter Pat Bailey, the 63-year-old interim head coach who hopes to earn the permanent job for 2020.

"People think there's a lot of pressure," Bailey said. "I'm going to be who I am. I can't be somebody else. In terms of the pressure part, I just think people a lot of times put undue pressure on themselves and make things out to be a lot bigger than what they are."

Bailey has been through this before, though not at this level. He was successor to Casey at George Fox College in Oregon and won the Division III championship four years before he joined Casey's Oregon State staff in 2008. As a high school coach in Oregon, Bailey replaced a two-time state champion coach at West Linn and led the program to a state runner-up finish before he left for George Fox.

Athletic director Scott Barnes named Bailey interim coach last September when Casey announced he was retiring after 24 seasons. Casey remains as a senior associate athletic director. Bailey's task is to keep the Beavers doing what they've been doing.

"Our expectations are extremely high," he said.

The Beavers begin the defense of their national title in Surprise, Ariz., when the Division I season opens Friday.

They open against New Mexico, play Gonzaga on Saturday and Minnesota, the team they beat in super regionals, on Sunday.

Kevin Abel, who as a freshman won a record four games in the College World Series and threw a two-hit shutout against Arkansas in Game 3 of the finals, heads a pitching staff that remains mostly intact. Bryce Fehmel, a 10-game winner last year, and Grant Gambrell are the Nos. 2 and 3 starters, and 16-save closer Jake Mulholl-



NATI HARNIK/AP

**Oregon State's Kevin Abel, who as a freshman won a record four games in the College World Series and threw a two-hit shutout against Arkansas in Game 3 of the finals, heads a mostly intact pitching staff.**

and returns.

The Beavers posted some of the best numbers in program history last year, and six of the players from the everyday lineup are gone. They still have catcher Adley Rutschman, the 2018 CWS Most Outstanding Player and possible No. 1 pick in the Major League Baseball draft in June, along with first baseman Zak Taylor and outfielder Preston Jones.

The Beavers will be going for a third straight CWS appearance. In 2017, they won their first two games in Omaha before going out with two straight losses to LSU. Last year, they lost their CWS opener before winning four straight to reach the best-of-three finals.

Ten other teams to watch, with 2018 record:

**Vanderbilt (35-27):** The preseason No. 1 team in three polls and SEC favorite returns eight position players from the team that came up one win short of making the CWS. The Commodores add one of the top freshman pitchers in the nation in 6-foot-4, 235-pound freerunner Kumar Rocker.

**LSU (39-27):** Antoine Duplantis needs 85 hits to overtake ex-Tiger Eddy Furniss as the SEC's career leader. Lead starter Zack Hess returns, and so does Eric Walkner after missing 2018 because of elbow surgery. AJ Labas, a 2018 Freshman All-American, is out after shoulder surgery.

**Texas Tech (45-20):** The Big 12 favorite

Red Raiders have made the CWS three of the last five years and have four straight seasons with at least 45 wins. They averaged better than 8 runs per game in 2018, and they figure to be one of the top-scoring teams again with 3B Josh Jung and OF Gabe Holt back.

**UCLA (38-21):** The Bruins, picked to win the Pac-12, got good news last summer when INF Matt McLain chose to go to school after being drafted No. 25 overall by the Diamondbacks. UCLA is strong up the middle, and OF Garrett Mitchell has recovered from a concussion.

**Florida (49-21):** With four straight CWS appearances and seven since 2010, the Gators never seem to lack for talent. They should survive losing two hitters who accounted for 34 home runs, as well as the top two starters and a record-setting closer.

**Florida State (43-19):** All-time NCAA coaching wins leader Mike Martin enters his 40th, and final, season at FSU. His Seminoles are ACC favorites despite lots of youth. Veteran 3B Drew Mendoza and lefty ace Drew Parish return.

**Minnesota (44-15):** The Gophers won their first regional since 1977 and will be led again by Big Ten pitcher of the year Patrick Fredrickson (9-0, 1.86 ERA) and a premier closer in Max Meyer (16 saves).

**Stanford (46-12):** IF/OF Andrew Dabach and OF/P Kyle Stowers combined for 27 of the team's 55 home runs, and Brendan Beck (8-0) and Jack Little (16 saves) are everything one would expect of Stanford pitchers.

**North Carolina (44-20):** The Tar Heels, who beat Oregon State in their CWS opener, are looking for redemption after collapsing in the last two innings of an elimination game against the Beavers. There's plenty of pitching, and 1B Michael Busch is back to lead the offense.

**Arkansas (48-21):** That ninth-inning, two-out, two-strike foul ball that dropped between three Razorbacks in Game 2 of the CWS finals cost Arkansas a shot at its first national championship. 3B Casey Martin should contend for SEC player of the year, there'll be plenty of offense and closer Matt Cronin is one of the best.

## Players to watch

Ten players to watch in college baseball this season:

**C Adley Rutschman, Oregon State:** Rutschman is widely projected as the No. 1 overall pick in the Major League Baseball draft in June. He batted .408 over 67 games and turned in one of the best individual performances in College World Series history, setting a record with 17 hits and batting .567 with 13 RBIs while earning Most Outstanding Player for the national champion Beavers.

**B Andrew Vaughn, California:** One of the best offensive seasons in program history led to Vaughn winning the Golden Spikes Award as national player of the year. His .402 batting average ranked third in Cal history, and he matched the program record and was second nationally with 23 home runs. He failed to reach base in only two of 54 games.

**3B Casey Martin, Arkansas:** Martin, who along with teammate Heston Kjerstad formed the best freshman

combination in the SEC, batted a team-leading .345 with 14 doubles and 13 home runs. Martin upped his game in the NCAA Tournament, leading the Razorbacks with a .352 average, including .357 in the CWS. He had eight hits in his first at-bats in Omaha, including 4-for-5 against Florida in the semifinals.

**LHP Graeme Stinson, Duke:** The 6-5, 260-pound junior throws mid to upper 90s, owns the best slider at this level and is poised to be the first college pitcher taken in the draft. Stinson moves to the top spot in the rotation after working mostly as a reliever last season, when he struck out 98 in 62 innings.

**OF/DH Bryant Packard, East Carolina:** It's going to be tough for the left-handed hitting junior to top last year. He led the American Athletic Conference in batting average (.406), hits (.89), slugging percentage (.671) and total bases (.147) and ranked among the league leaders in on-base percentage (.462), home runs (14), runs (.61) and RBIs (50).

**OF/IF Austin Martin, Vanderbilt:** The sophomore might be the most versatile player in the country. He made 58 starts last season at six different positions. The Commodores' leadoff man batted .338 for the season and a team-best .308 in SEC games, and his 22 stolen bases were most in the conference and most by a Vandy player in five years.

**RHP Andre Pallante, UC Irvine:** The junior was a unanimous All-American who led the Big West with a 10-1 record in 15 starts, all but one lasting fewer than six innings. His 1.60 ERA was best in the Big West and sixth in the country, and he struck out 115 in 101 1/3 innings. Pallante will get a good measure of himself right away when he faces 2018 College World Series qualifier Washington on Friday.

**C Shea Langeliers, Baylor:** Another top draft prospect, Langeliers enters his third year starting as the best defensive catcher in the nation, having thrown out 23 of 33 base stealers and posting a .994 fielding percentage. His walk-off

RBI single gave Baylor its first Big 12 Tournament championship, and he set career highs with 18 doubles, 11 home runs and 44 RBIs.

**RHP Max Meyer, Minnesota:** Meyer and staff ace Patrick Fredrickson will be in the spotlight again for a Gophers team that lost five everyday players. Fredrickson was the 9-0 and named Big Ten pitcher of the year as the Friday night starter. However, there's more onus on Meyer to repeat what he did last year, when he set a school record with 16 saves, none bigger than his three-inning, six-strikeout performance against UCLA in regionals.

**LHP Zach Thompson, Kentucky:** Thompson had a fantastic freshman season, but an arm injury caused him to miss his first seven starts in SEC play last year. He's fully recovered, having raised eyebrows last summer when he pitched a combined 8 1/3 shutout innings for the USA Collegiate National Team.

—Associated Press



TED KIRK/AP

Arkansas' Casey Martin

## SKIING/GOLF/OLYMPICS

## Shiffrin gets GS bronze

By STEVE DOUGLAS  
Associated Press

ARE, Sweden — Mikaela Shiffrin's careful planning failed to pay off at the world championships as her gold-medal bid in the giant slalom was blown off course by strong winds and a Slovakian rival emerging as the biggest threat to her Alpine skiing dominance.

Petra Vlhova won Slovakia's first world title Thursday after finishing 0.14 seconds ahead of Viktoria Rebensburg in a giant slalom race in tough conditions because of winds that reached 70 kph (43.5 mph) and unseasonably high temperatures.

Shiffrin won the bronze medal, 0.38 seconds back.

Vlhova won silver on Friday in the Alpine combined — an event Shiffrin chose to skip, to the surprise of some, to preserve energy for the giant slalom and slalom after winning the super-G on the opening day of competition.

However, Shiffrin was 0.44 seconds off Rebensburg's lead after the first run and had only the sixth fastest run in second leg.

Vlhova put her hands to her head when Rebensburg, who



Marco Trovati/AP

**American Mikaela Shiffrin competes during the women's giant slalom Thursday at the alpine ski World Championships in Are, Sweden. Shiffrin took bronze in the event.**

was last down in the second leg, crossed the line with the second-best time. Rebensburg, the 2010 Olympic champion in giant slalom, was 0.40 seconds ahead at the third checkpoint only to lose 0.54 seconds in the bottom section.

With gusts buffeting the skiers — it was so windy that organizers removed the banner above the finishing line — Vlhova's power helped her negate a 0.19 deficit to Rebensburg after the first run. She also overcame crashing into a gate in between the second and third checkpoints, which saw her briefly lose control.

"Finally," she said, "I can show to everyone who is Vlhova."

Plenty already knew her. Vlhova is the only racer to beat Shiffrin in slalom this season and

she also won two giant slaloms recently — tying with Shiffrin in the final GS before the worlds.

Shiffrin acknowledged that she struggled to get a "response from the surface" after rain for the past two days in the central Swedish resort of Are. It meant she ended up happy to come away with third place for her sixth world championship medal — just two off the American record held by Lindsey Vonn.

"I thought after 1st run, 'If I can walk away from today with a medal after first run, that's great,'" Shiffrin said in a tweet posted by the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Team. "Bronze feels awesome!"

The slalom is on Saturday, where Shiffrin is an even bigger favorite.

## Semenya case tests science, sports

By GRAHAM DUNBAR  
Associated Press

GENEVA — Caster Semenya's running future will be decided by three judges starting next week in a landmark case that will challenge science and gender politics.

The two-time Olympic 800-meter champion from South Africa is looking to overturn eligibility rules for hyperandrogenic athletes proposed by track and field's governing body. The IAAF wants to require women with naturally elevated testosterone to lower their levels by medication before being allowed to compete in world-class races from 400 meters to one mile.

"She looks forward to responding to the IAAF at the upcoming hearing," Semenya's lawyers in Johannesburg, Norton Rose Fulbright, said Thursday in a statement. "She asks that she be respected and treated as any other athlete. Her genetic gift should be celebrated, not discriminated against."

A scheduled five-day appeal case starting Monday is among the longest ever heard by the Court of Arbitration for Sport. The verdict, expected next month, could also be among the most ethically controversial in the sports

court's 35-year history.

The panel of three CAS judges could decide based only on science. Can the IAAF prove women with Differences of Sexual Development (DSD) get a significant performance advantage from male levels of testosterone.

The IAAF insists no woman is being reclassified as male, and it "makes no judgment about gender or sexual identity."

"[The rules] are about leveling the playing field to ensure fair and meaningful competition in the sport of athletics where success is determined by talent, dedication and hard work rather than other contributing factors," IAAF president Sebastian Coe said last year.

Still, Semenya's case has been championed by United Nations human rights experts and women's sport activists, led by Billie Jean King, who see potential abuse and discrimination in the track federation's proposal.

As for the science, lawyers for Semenya will call expert witnesses from the United States and her native South Africa to discredit the IAAF's research. The evidence could help deliver a second loss for the IAAF at CAS on an issue that has flared for a decade and cast a shadow on Semenya's career.

In 2009, the 18-year-old prodigy won her first world championship title in the 800 meters, finishing in 1 minute, 55.45 seconds to become the third fastest woman this century. Hours before the race in Berlin, it emerged that the IAAF had asked for Semenya to undergo a gender verification test.

The IAAF introduced Hyperandrogenic Regulations in 2011 to replace the gender policy with guidance limiting women to serum levels of natural testosterone below 10 nanomoles per liter of blood. Semenya then finished second in the 800 at the 2012 London Olympics in 1:57.23, but was later upgraded to gold after the original winner was disqualified for doping.

The IAAF's regulations were later blocked by Indian sprinter Dutee Chand, who won a CAS verdict in 2015. Three judges, including Canadian professor Richard McLaren, said the IAAF did not prove hyperandrogenic women gained a significant advantage, and invited the governing body to submit new evidence.

While the rules were suspended, Semenya won a second Olympic title at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games in 1:55.28 — more than four seconds faster than her best times in the previous two seasons.

## Garcia apologizes for Saudi tantrum

By DOUG FERGUSON  
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Sergio Garcia apologized in a statement and in person to the players in his group when he damaged five greens at the Saudi International. He apologized in a social media post and in an interview at his locker Wednesday at Riviera.

"That has been the easy part. He has had plenty of experience over the years."

Garcia said the challenge now is to make sure it does not happen again, knowing that the scrutiny of his behavior will be greater than ever.

"I'm sure I'm going to hear it throughout the year," Garcia told The Associated Press in his first interview since he was disqualified Feb. 2 for the damage he did to five greens out of frustration early in the third round.

"My job is to make sure I deal with it the best way possible, and show them that I can grow, that I can move forward and I can be who I am in the right way," he said. "I want to face my mistakes head on. My job is to go out there and enjoy my game and show everyone that no matter what, I can be the best behaved guy in the classroom... I just hope I can maintain that discipline."

The Genesis Open is his first event since he lost his head early in the third round at the Saudi International, which he attributed to a personal issue that put him in a bad frame of mind at the start of the week and greens at Royal Greens in Saudi Arabia that were new, grainy and slow.

He did not disclose the personal matter and said it was no excuse, and that he knew immediately he had done wrong.

"It hit me like on the 10th hole. I started thinking: 'What am I doing? Get your head back on top of your shoulders,'" Garcia said. "I know I lost it."

The 39-year-old Spaniard has put his emotions on full display since he turned pro in 1999 at age 19, challenged Tiger Woods in the 2005 PGA Championship at Medinah and played in the first of nine Ryder Cups.

There was great passion when he won the Masters in 2017 for his first major. But the explosive, petulant variety has been seen far more often over the years, whether it was kicking a shoe that nearly struck an official at Wentworth in 2000, blaming a European Tour rules official for a two-shot penalty in Australia or accusing Woods of disturbing the gallery at the TPC Sawgrass, a rift that ended with Garcia making a racially insensitive comment about him.

Damaging greens in the middle of a round, which affected the players behind him, caught even his friends by surprise.

"We always think he gets over it, but there's no doubt he's out of line behaving like that," said Adam Scott, one of his closest friends in golf. "He said he needs



REED SAXON/AP

**Sergio Garcia is playing this weekend for the first time since he was disqualified for damaging greens at the Saudi International on Feb. 2.**

to understand his emotions and channel that in a better way. I'm not a psychologist and don't know how to do that, but I think it's a good thing for him. The game can get the better of us at times. It seems to get the better of him more than some others."

Garcia's disqualification — the European Tour said he would not be suspended — ended a streak of seven straight top 10s worldwide, which began when he was picked for the Ryder Cup in France. He went 3-1-0 for the week at Le Golf National.

His game was in good shape. Now he has a reputation to mend.

"I feel terrible about it," Garcia said. "I've been thinking about it for the last week, every day. I'm an emotional player. That emotion is probably my biggest strength, but it's also one of my biggest flaws. If I channel it the right way, it's amazing. I think that's why people follow me the way they do. If I channel it the wrong way, it's too extreme. My goal is to make sure the bad gets better and the good stays."

Rory McIlroy, another of his close friends, said there was "no excuse" for what Garcia did in Saudi Arabia.

"It's not acceptable," McIlroy said. "If you've got stuff bothering you, let the course be your sanctuary. I've had to deal with that in the past."

Some of the strongest comments came from three-time major champion Brooks Koepka, who said on "Playing Through Podcast" that the Saudi incident was "Sergio acting like a child."

"You're 40 years old, so you've got to grow up eventually," Koepka said.

Garcia pondered what he would say to Koepka when he sees him next week in the Mexico Championship.

"I'm going to tell him I agree," Garcia said. "I'm the first one to say that I was wrong. I agree with what he said. That's why we're here to get better, to grow up and become better people."

# HIGH SCHOOL: DODEA EUROPE

## Wrestling

# Ramstein, Stuttgart well-positioned

Teams combine for 50 wrestlers in the final brackets for two-day European championships

By GREGORY BROOME  
Stars and Stripes

The Ramstein Royals have a slight head start in the race for the 2019 DODEA Europe Division 1 team wrestling championship.

Ramstein has 28 of its wrestlers in the final brackets for the two-day European championship meet, while the five-time defending champion Stuttgart Panthers checked in with 22.

That's no guarantee that the Royals will topple the Panthers' dynasty, of course. Only one wrestler per school can be designated a points-earner in each of the tournament's 14 weight classes, though a school's secondary wrestlers can contribute by finishing ahead of other teams' entries and denying those schools points.

Stuttgart's hopes of extending its title reign start with its core of three 2018 European champions. Sean Smith is the favorite at 145 pounds after claiming the title at 126 pounds a year ago, while John Carroll is the odds-on favorite to repeat in the heavyweight 285-pound class.

Stuttgart senior Benjamin Fielding, meanwhile, is looking to complete one of the most accomplished careers in DODEA Europe wrestling history. A first-place finish at 138 pounds this weekend would give him his fourth straight European title in four weight classes, while an unbeaten showing over the two days will cap an undefeated career.



WILLIAM HOWARD/Stars and Stripes

**SHAPE** wrestler Sean Kilrain tries to pin Kaiserslautern's Christian Torres-Forkn during a high school meet at RAF Lakenheath, England. Kilrain is a 160-pound qualifier for the DODEA-Europe meet.

Ramstein has two reigning champions on its roster in Andres Hart, who will vie for a second straight title at 106 pounds, and Conner Mackie, who won at 120 pounds competing for Kaiserslautern last season and will look to secure the 126-pound crown for the Royals this year.

Event host Wiesbaden has 14

wrestlers in the tournament, including Artrey Allen, who won at 113 pounds last year and is now a contender at 126.

Rota has the edge in the Division II race with eight wrestlers, while Sigonella holds the clear edge in Division III with six entries. Munich, last year's small-school champion, won't be

represented this year.

The event starts Friday with four preliminary rounds. Saturday's schedule includes a final preliminary round, followed by a semifinal round, fifth- and third-place matches and a slate of European championship bouts across 14 weight classes.

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## Qualifiers

Qualifiers for the DODEA Europe Division 1 wrestling championship that begins Friday:

### 106 pounds

1. Ethan Gumborn (Nap); 2. Andres Hart (Ram); 3. McKinley Fielding (Stu); 4. John Odum (Ram); 5. Ethan Robles (Hoh); 6. Will Paule (Vic); 7. Asa Ketter (SHAPE); 8. Dylan Estes (Sig); 9. Lukas Ahrend (Kais); 10. Diego Steiner (Stu); 11. Josh Gall (Kais); 12. Trey Chaney (Bru).

### 113

1. Matthew Oreskovich (Ram); 2. Carson Hicks (Spang); 3. Ethan Herrera (Avi); 4. Aaron Austin (Stu); 5. Joseph Midkiff (Nap); 6. Dieter Messner (Ram); 7. Johnathan Alvarado (Vic); 8. Dante Robinson (SHAPE); 9. Nathan Pierce (Bru); 10. Heather Ansley (Stu); 11. Skye Flannigan (Kais); 12. Wutti Khotsang (Nap).

### 120

1. Phillip Rivera (Rota); 2. Jeremy LeClair (Ram); 3. Brandon Wells (Wies); 4. Seth Crisp (Ram); 5. David Segalla (Stu); 6. Caleb Smith (Vic); 7. Brandon Castillo (Spang); 8. Dilyn Collins (Alc); 9. Gabriel Suttle (Avi); 10. Chris Bacon (Wies); 11. Ivan Centeno (Stu); 12. Caleb Burnett (Bru).

### 126

1. Conner Mackie (Ram); 2. Jada Llamido (Vic); 3. Artrey Allen (Wies); 4. Kaden Rodriguez (Rota); 5. Carter Hanes (Stu); 6. Nathan Severence (Lake); 7. Munro Manning (Sig); 8. Eli Rothas (Ram); 9. Sean Carter (Wies); 10. Joseph Kraemer (SHAPE); 11. Giancarlo Ferrero (Nap); 12. Walter Denson (Stu).

### 132

1. Christian Griffith (Ram); 2. Ryan Morrow (Stu); 3. Benjamin Latimer (Sig); 4. Chase Faulkenberry (Avi); 5. Josh Robles (Hoh); 6. Brian McKinley (Ram); 7. Conner Head (Bru); 8. Sergio Silva (Vic); 9. Jack Engleke (Stu); 10. Xavier Wells (Nap); 11. Nicolas Cordona (Wies); 12. No Wiegert (Alc).

### 138

1. Christian Cimino (Vic); 2. Logan Campbell (Ram); 3. Benjamin Fielding (Stu); 4. Napoleon Cox (Kais); 5. Ryan Knutson (Lake); 6. Baco (Sig); 7. Jack Rohling (Wies); 8. Sebastian Zbytniewski (Nap); 9. Cole Hinchliff (Avi); 10. Paulo Aponte (Alc); 11. Aidan Styr (Ram); 12. Kiefer Vogler (Stu).

### 145

1. Sean Smith (Stu); 2. Michael Hauser (Avi); 3. Marcus Bradley (Ram); 4. Roberts Swart (Ank); 5. Taylor Worley (Ram); 6. Brian Haney (Spang); 7. Brandon Mallon (Lake); 8. Brandon Buehler (Wies); 9. Brandon Brocknall (SHAPE); 10. Christian Brashears (Vic); 12. Zion Shaw (Wies).

### 152

1. Christian Just (Stu); 2. Tony Llamido (Vic); 3. Oliver Seelig (Ram); 4. Robbie Mitchell (Nap); 5. Zak Kappenman (SHAPE); 6. Noah Motton (Stu); 7. Liam McMurray (Rota); 8. Dominic Marts (Gum); 9. Jay Brown (Kais); 10. Ashton Guza (AFNORTH); 11. Luis Corona (Vic).

### 160

1. Hyrum Draper (Vic); 2. Gregory Sanchez (Stu); 3. Sean Kilrain (SHAPE); 4. Christian Forster (Kais); 5. Robbie Berentson (Lake); 6. Jacob Black (Vic); 7. Ray Castro (Wies); 8. Daniel Merrill (Avi); 9. Easton Colvin (Rota); 10. Liam McShea (Ram); 11. Gavin Andrews (Ram); 12. Steven Hughes (Wies).

### 170

1. Owen Peterson (Ram); 2. Amari Pyatt (Sig); 3. James Child (Wies); 4. Joseph Kirkham (Stu); 5. Phoenix Lammenshine (Vic); 6. Kyle Bureleson (Nap); 7. Drew Fleming (AFN); 8. Garrett Cheney (Wies); 9. Sam Hennig (SHAPE); 10. Connor Hogan (Ram).

### 182

1. Wesley Coglianese (Stu); 2. Brennan Colvin (Rota); 3. Gabe Davis (Ram); 4. Brenden Keafoha (Lake); 5. Nick Luminarias (Lake); 6. Hunter Anderson (Hoh); 7. Caleb Hill (Ram); 8. Sam Swafford (Vic); 9. Draic McConville (Wies); 10. Henry Tovere (SHAPE); 11. Bradley Farris (Vic).

### 195

1. Nick Mooney (Vic); 2. Gavin Vasquez (Rota); 3. Connor Boyer (Stu); 4. Ryan Haddock (Kais); 5. vacant due to injury; 6. Jacob Ridenbaugh (Ram); 7. Jacob Lorenze (Vic); 8. Nico Aponte (AFN).

### 220

1. Auguston de Sousa Matos (Nap); 2. Deven Holland (Wies); 3. Theodore Eugene Ward (Ram); 4. Kyle Bureleson (Nap); 7. Ty Hoopes (Ram); 6. Cooper MacNicholl (Rota); 7. Volkan Ceylan (Bru); 8. Judda Myers (AFN).

### 285

1. Josh Whitman (Vic); 2. John Carroll (Stu); 3. Carl Wilcox (Ram); 4. Jackson Fontenot (Wies); 5. Anthony Perni (Vic); 6. Nick Buehler (Rota); 7. Charles Everhart (Vic); 8. Anthony Zamor (Kais); 9. Marshall Ellis (Bru); 10. Zsazvar Salas (Nap).

## Girls basketball

# Naples reaches tournament rested and tested

By GREGORY BROOME  
Stars and Stripes

After an impressive runner-up finish in the 2018 DODEA Europe Division 1 girls basketball championship, the Naples Wildcats won't be sneaking up on anyone at the upcoming 2019 tournament.

But the Wildcats have been keeping a rather low profile this season.

Naples enters the European tournament seeded in the middle of the nine-school pack, owing to its 3-2 divisional record. But the Wildcats' two divisional losses — a 40-27 loss to Stuttgart in a rematch of last year's title game, and an 18-16 decision to Vilsek — happened more than two months ago, and the Wildcats have performed well since.

They remain a threat in the Division I bracket, regardless of record or seed.

"We have been passing, working the ball around better," Naples coach Tim Smith said. "If we



KENT HARRIS/Stars and Stripes

**Naples' Mia Rawlins, right, and Aviano's Alyssa Hardy chase the ball down in the Wildcats' 58-29 victory on Feb. 1.**

can pressure and run we can be very successful."

Naples will arrive in Wiesbaden in a curious predicament, both well-rested and weary all at

once.

The team is idle for the final weekend of the regular season, having completed its regular season schedule Feb. 8-9 with an

overwhelming sweep of previously unbeaten Sigonella, the reigning Division III champion. That gives the Wildcats well more than a week between their regular-season finale and Feb. 20 tournament opener.

Smith plans to put that time to good use with "skill work and conditioning," as well as extra attention to situational strategies such as inbound plays.

That sounds like the recipe for a rejuvenated, prepared team. But much of that decompression will be reversed by the epic road trip the Wildcats will require just to reach the tournament's German locale.

"You have to put the long bus trip out of your mind and mentally be ready to play," Smith said.

The Wildcats boys enter as similar dark-horse title contenders, counting victories over Lakenheath, Stuttgart and Vicenza in their 4-1 divisional mark.

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## AUTO RACING

# Veteran Johnson poised to silence critics

## Seven-time champ eager to show he's not done after winless 2018

By JENNA FRYER  
Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. Jimmie Johnson, one of the most polite and professional athletes in sports, rarely gets rattled. Unless he is being trolled on social media.

Johnson's patience was very much tested last season, the worst of his NASCAR career. He could handle the losing, the internal struggles at Hendrick Motorsports and the final races with longtime crew chief Chad Knaus.

It was the strangers who suggested his best days are over that got under Johnson's skin and forced him to clap back on Twitter. His responses were sometimes humorous if out of character for Johnson, until he stumbled upon a post that called him a "has been" and told him to retire.

"I'm far from done, JA," Johnson wrote in a rebuttal last October.

The retort is now his mantra as Johnson heads into the 2019 season determined to prove he is still capable of winning a record eighth Cup championship. He had shirts printed and distributed to friends, and five-time IndyCar champion Scott Dixon recently honored his NASCAR contemporary with a video of him exercising in a "I'm not done yet JA" shirt.

Johnson has seven championships, tied with Hall of Famers Richard Petty and Dale Earnhardt for most in NASCAR, and with 83 career victories he is just two wins shy of sole possession of fourth place on the all-time list. He has nothing to prove to anyone, but his aggravation is real at the suggestion he should hang it up.

"I get to say when I'm done," Johnson said. "It did weigh on me and I can't wait to win and win often. I think that would be something really nice to say back to all those people that suggested that I was washed up and done."

Johnson begins his 18th season at Daytona International Speedway, where he will lead a new-look No. 48 team. Lowe's had sponsored his car since his 2002 rookie year but left NASCAR at the end of last season. Ally Financial Inc. is his new sponsor and its paint scheme and color palette are the first significant changes to the No. 48 Chevrolet since the team launched with Johnson.

There's been a change at the top, too, as team owner Rick Hendrick split Johnson and Knaus. It was Knaus who built the team from scratch, back in 2002, and he and Johnson had been together from the start.

Although successful, the duo had their disagreements and Hendrick on at least one occasion threatened to separate them. They won their seventh title together in 2016 but the need for a change emerged the very next season when Johnson won three races but never truly contended

### Daytona 500 fast facts

**Track:** Daytona International Speedway (oval, 2.5 miles).

**Race distance:** 500 miles, 200 laps.

**Last year:** Austin Dillon opened 2018 with just his second career win.

**TV:** AFN-Sports, 8:30 p.m. Sunday CET; 2:30 a.m. Monday, JKT.

**Things to know:** The 2019 season kicks off with the iconic Daytona 500. Brad Keselowski, Joey Logano and Kevin Harvick are listed as the co-favorites at 9-to-1. ... Reigning rookie of the year William Byron will be on the pole next to Hendrick Motorsports teammate Alex Bowman.

...NASCAR announced last week that it plans to move its post-race inspection to the race track immediately following the race. Cars that fail post-race inspection will be disqualified. ... The last known disqualification of a race winner in NASCAR's top series came 59 years ago at Wilson Speedway in North Carolina. Emanuel Zervakis was demoted to last place after inspectors discovered an oversized fuel tank.

for the title.

Hendrick Motorsports was in a deep rebuild and all four of its teams suffered last year, but the struggles were most glaring for Johnson. It was his first winless Cup season and he finished a career-low 14th in the final standings. Hendrick had made a mid-season decision to move Knaus in 2019 to driver William Byron while Kevin Mendeering, an Xfinity Series crew chief, was promoted to one of the biggest jobs in racing.

Hendrick believes the change was overdue.

"It's no different than an NFL team when you've got a really good coach and a really good quarterback and a really good team, but for some reason it is tired and you need a spark," Hendrick said. "You just can't keep going back again and again and again trying to hold it together. Chad needed a new challenge and so did Jimmie. The combination, they both had tremendous desire, but it just needed something fresh. Jimmie has now got a guy who is very technical, but Jimmie is a champion and he wants to lead the team now."

Mendeering returns to the Hendrick shop after three seasons as a crew chief at JR Motorsports, the affiliated Xfinity program where HMS crew members and engineers prepare for the big leagues. His first Cup crew chief job puts Mendeering in charge of helping Johnson win that elusive eighth title.

"I'm ready. The more prepared you are, the more work you put in,



JOHN RAOUX/AP

Jimmie Johnson celebrates in Victory Lane after winning the NASCAR Clash at Daytona International Speedway on Sunday. The seven-time champion didn't win a race in all of 2018.

the less pressure there is because you are ready for every situation," Mendeering said. "Jimmie wants to win at everything he does and I think he has been rejuvenated. He is going to do whatever it takes and he is going to push himself past the limit. He will be back in Victory Lane this year."

He already was on Sunday, after triggering a wreck that wiped out nearly the entire 20-car field at Daytona and zipped to

the lead to win the rain-shortened exhibition Clash. He also claimed the No. 3 spot for this weekend's Daytona 500.

Johnson got a kick out of Dixon, the top IndyCar driver of his era, wearing that shirt last month. The two have become friendly over the years and Dixon understands why Johnson gets so angry at his critics.

"It's an important part of racing, you're always going to have

people that love someone, hate somebody else and most of the time the guy who's successful gets hated on a lot," Dixon said. "That's not fun to see the same guy win all the time. Jimmie's done a very good job of that."

"With Jimmie, I don't think he needs that motivator, but it's also important to use it and turn it into a positive to help yourself. Which I think he's very good at. He wants to punch someone out!"

## NBA



AP Photos

From left: Houston Rockets guard James Harden; Golden State Warriors guard Stephen Curry; and Dallas Mavericks' guard Luka Dončić. All three players make use of the step-back three-pointer — a perfect weapon in the modern NBA, and practically a necessity in a game where the ability to find space to shoot from behind the arc is more valued than ever before.

## Shot: Harden most prolific user of step-back three

### FROM BACK PAGE

and shooting step-backs during this week-end's All-Star three-point contest, there are a few things to consider.

Even Stephen Curry said it's a tough shot to make. It's fundamentally flawed and sometimes looks like a violation.

"You mean when they jump backwards and travel and shoot a three?" Spurs coach Gregg Popovich quipped. "I guess it has been made legal. I don't know. It's very difficult to guard."

That's because the defender has to be prepared that the player with the ball is going to drive to the basket. But instead of continuing forward, the offensive player suddenly gathers his feet and steps backward to shoot, taking advantage of the extra space he has created.

Curry is one of the most prolific three-point shooters in history, but he's also a wizard with his dribble. So whoever is defending him can never quite be sure which way he is going.

"Obviously you respect the athletic guys that can drive and use their first step and explosiveness and all that type of stuff," Curry said. "It's a tough shot to make consistently, but the guys that do, it's obviously a shot and a look that you can always kind of count on to create space and knock it down."

There will be more than a few hoisted up during the All-Star festivities.

But nobody shoots it more — or arguably better — than Harden, whose 151 step-back three-pointers coming into this week represented 15 percent of the 1,006 makes thus far, according to the NBA's statistics. He dribbles patiently until he sees an opening, then either drives for a layup or foul, or steps back for the three, sometimes from a few steps beyond the arc.

Harden, a seven-time All-Star, league MVP and scoring champion last season, has scored

### A step(back) above the rest

**151**      **2,500**      **36.5**

Number of step-back three-pointers made by Houston Rockets guard James Harden this season, the most in the NBA.

SOURCE: Associated Press

30 or more points in 30 straight games, third-longest streak ever. Averaging 36.5 points, he's poised to easily win another scoring title. He said he turned to the step-back three as a way to evolve with a game that has seen more than 2,500 step-back threes taken already this season, after there were only 584 for all of 2014-15, according to NBA.com.

"I mean, every single year you have to come back better than you were the year before, and for me I had a pretty good year last year. But you've got to come back better and come up with a new move or a new package to keep defenders on their heels," Harden said. "So whether it's a step-back or a slide step, just to create separation to be able to get my shot off."

Harden has the green light in Houston, though that doesn't make it a good shot — at least not for everyone else.

There are times when Harden launches one where it looks like a horrible shot. He willingly takes longer attempts without fully squaring his shoulders up to the rim, which goes against just about everything coaches taught years ago, and critics watching him shuffle his feet have seen instances where he certainly appeared to get away with traveling.

Because of the degree of difficulty, the step-back three may only be for a handful of players.

Step-back threes taken already this season. There were only 584 for all of 2014-15, according to NBA.com.

Average points per game for Harden this season. Harden has 15 percent of the 1,006 makes on step-back threes thus far.

Rockets coach Mike D'Antoni compares it to Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's sky hook, a shot that everyone might try, but few could master.

"Certain guys have certain talents but it's a hard shot," D'Antoni said. "I don't know what the stats are, but it's a low 20-percent kind of shot for most people and he's at about 40."

Actually, Harden's 41.5 percent on step-back threes was only a little higher than the league average of 39.5 percent, though that could be misleading because so few players attempt them — and the ones who do are often already good shooters.

D'Antoni figures someone will come along and shoot it well, and that player may have already arrived. Dončić is far ahead of anyone but Harden in attempts and makes, and the Mavericks rookie's goodbye highlight in Europe was a one-legged, step-back three that helped Real Madrid put away Game 4 of the ACB Championship series.

Dončić smiled when asked about the step-back three, saying: "A lot of guys have special moves. That's my kind of move."

And even Popovich, no big fan of the three-point happy game the NBA has become, gives credit to the step-back shooters.

"They are great at it, that's for sure," he said. "Take nothing away from them. It's been developed, it's used and no one is better at it than they are. It's virtually impossible to guard, but they perfected it."

## Scoreboard

### Eastern Conference

#### Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Toronto	43	16	72%	0
Boston	37	21	63%	5½
Philadelphia	37	21	63%	5½
Brooklyn	30	29	50%	13
New York	10	47	17%	32

#### Southeast Division

Charlotte	27	29	48%	—
Miami	26	30	46%	1
Orlando	26	32	44%	2
Washington	24	34	41%	—
Atlanta	19	38	33%	8½

#### Central Division

Milwaukee	43	14	75%	—
Indiana	38	20	65%	5½
Detroit	30	30	50%	16½
Chicago	14	44	24%	29½
Cleveland	12	46	20%	31½

### Western Conference

#### Southwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	33	24	57%	—
San Antonio	33	26	55%	1
Dallas	26	31	45%	7
New Orleans	25	33	43%	8½
Memphis	23	36	39%	11

#### Northwest Division

Denver	39	18	68%	—
Oklahoma City	37	19	66%	1½
Portland	34	22	59%	4
Utah	32	25	56%	7
Minnesota	27	30	47%	12

#### Pacific Division

Golden State	41	16	71%	—
L.A. Clippers	32	27	54%	10
Sacramento	30	27	52%	11
L.A. Lakers	28	29	49%	13
Phoenix	11	46	19%	31

### Wednesday's games

Brooklyn 148, Cleveland 139	
Milwaukee 106, Indiana 97	
Boston 118, Detroit 110	
Philadelphia 126, New York 111	
Toronto 129, Washington 120	
Portland 122, Memphis 110	
Minnesota 121, Houston 111	
Miami 112, Dallas 101	
Denver 120, Sacramento 118	
L.A. Clippers 134, Phoenix 107	
Portland 129, Golden State 107	

### Thursday's games

Charlotte at Orlando	
New York at Atlanta	
Oklahoma City at New Orleans	

### Friday's game

Team World vs. Team USA at Charlotte, N.C.	
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### Saturday's game

No games scheduled	
2019 NBA All-Star Game	
Team LeBron West vs. Team Giannis East at Charlotte, N.C. 8 p.m. ET/7 p.m. PT	
Monday CET; 10 a.m. JKT	

### Leaders

	Scoring	FG	FT	PTS	AVG
Harden, OKC	54	581	540	1976	36.6
George, HOU	55	518	326	1577	28.7
Curry, GSW	46	440	240	1316	28.6
Davis, NOR	44	446	120	1252	28.5
Durant, OKC	57	554	360	1573	27.6
Simmons, PHI	44	443	291	1273	27.3
Antetokounmpo, MIL	53	531	349	1440	27.2
Leonard, TOR	43	398	286	1159	27.0
Lillard, POR	56	486	340	1474	26.3
Griffin, DET	54	480	324	1418	26.3
Walker, CHA	46	467	248	1412	26.3
Beal, WAS	58	535	243	1458	25.1
Booker, PHX	44	381	228	1081	24.6
Irving, BOS	47	420	149	1108	23.6
Towns, MIN	57	479	261	1319	23.1
Dwight, NYG	41	406	217	1123	21.7
Mitchell, UTA	53	435	204	1189	22.2
Thompson, GSW	56	478	102	1224	21.9
Westbrook, OKC	46	447	345	1155	21.4
Westbrook, OKC	48	394	198	1019	21.2

### Rebounds

	FG	OFF	DEF	TOT	AVG
Drummond, DET	53	271	524	795	15.0
Embiid, PHI	46	124	397	521	13.5
Jordan, NYK	56	183	367	550	13.4
Dwight, NYG	49	238	306	544	13.4
Goertzel, UTA	57	214	519	733	12.9
Antetokounmpo, MIL	52	124	549	673	12.7
Capeala, HOU	42	208	500	708	12.2
Whiteside, MIA	48	181	491	672	12.4
Carroll, ORL	57	192	494	686	12.0
Towns, MIN	57	192	494	686	12.0

### Assists

	FG	AST	AVG
Westbrook, OKC	48	537	11.2
Lowry, TOR	58	432	9.4
Hollinger, POR	57	408	9.0
Simmons, PHI	57	400	8.9
Kaplan, HOU	57	393	8.9
Harden, OKC	54	417	7.7
Young, ATL	57	400	7.3
Curry, GSW	42	307	7.3
Fox, SAC	56	401	7.2
Irving, BOS	47	325	6.9

### Calendar

Feb. 16 — Three-point, slam dunk contest, Charlotte, N.C.	
Feb. 17 — NBA All-Star Game, Charlotte, N.C.	
March 1 — Playoff eligibility waiver deadline.	
April 10 — Regular season ends.	
April 13 — Playoffs begin.	
May 14 — Draft lottery, Chicago.	
May 15 — Draft, New Orleans.	
May 30 — NBA Finals begin.	
June 20 — NBA Draft.	

## COLLEGE BASKETBALL

## Serving time on the pine

Coaches reluctant to empty bench for fear of comebacks, falling efficiency ratings

By JOHN MARSHALL  
Associated Press

TEMPE, Ariz. — The score climbs as the clock ticks down. Many fans have started to leave or are already gone. The regulars start to come off the floor, sometimes individually, sometimes as a group after their day's work is done.

At the end of the bench, a group of players sit at the edge of their seats, anticipating an opportunity to enter a game that's long been decided. Those precious seconds at the end of a game are their chance to play after all those long hours of practice.

The wait can seem like an eternity for the walk-ons.

"It's usually around two minutes left when you know, OK, game is out of hand, we might have a shot to get in here," said Arizona State junior walk-on Grant Fogerty. "You see the score, you see the time and you hope coach comes to get you."

The problem for walk-ons: Most coaches don't take out their rotation players until there's about a minute left in the game, no matter the score.

Whether it's fear of a massive comeback, wanting starters to finish off a complete game or trying to keep their team's efficiency rating up, coaches find it hard to pull that take-out-your-starters trigger.

Typically, there's no set plan for removing the starters, no specific threshold to reach. It's almost always done by feel, occasionally predicated on what the opposing coach does.

"I kind of play it by ear," Arizona State coach Bobby Hurley said. "Some of it is, has the other coach taken out his top players? If I notice that right away, I'll immediately want to put in some of my reserve players."

Hurley had a chance to pull his starters in the Sun Devils' Jan. 19 game at Oregon.

Tied at halftime, Arizona State went on a 19-0 run to take a 19-point lead with four minutes left. The lead was 13 with two minutes left. 15 with a minute left, yet the walk-ons remained on the bench until the final buzzer of the Sun Devils' 78-64 win.

"We kind of talked about playing 40 minutes and I felt like we were right there to play 40 minutes," Hurley said. "I just wanted the guys who were out there to just finish the game."

Tennessee coach Rick Barnes probably could have pulled his starters right after halftime in a Jan. 5 win over Georgia.

The Vols had a 32-point halftime lead and stretched it to a whopping 49 points with seven minutes left. Even with the score so lopsided, Barnes was reluctant to take out his starters, waiting until the 1:37 mark to fully empty his bench. Tennessee led by 44 at



PHIL SEARNS/AP

Florida State forward Mfiondu Kabengele (25) and guards David Nichols (11) and Trent Forrest (3) react on the bench near the end of the second half against Wake Forest in FSU's 88-66 win on Wednesday.

**‘It’s usually around two minutes left when you know, OK, game is out of hand, we might have a shot to get in here.’**

Grant Fogerty  
Arizona State walk-on

the time and won 87-60.

Barnes mentioned a game the week prior, when UCLA pulled off an epic comeback against Oregon, rallying from eight points down with 45 seconds left in overtime to win 87-84.

"I've seen too much in my lifetime," Barnes said. "As a coach, I'm telling you, you never feel good until you know it's over."

The NCAA's new evaluation tool, the NET rankings, also plays a factor in when coaches empty the bench.

The rankings cap victory mar-

gin at 10 points, but there is no limit on offensive and defensive efficiency. So while running up the score will do no good for margin of victory component past 10 points, it certainly could help efficiency-wise. That's why coaches have been calling what seem like unusual timeouts late in games that are all but decided and keeping their starters in longer during blowouts.

"Decimal points, maybe it does matter because we don't know the formula," Virginia Tech coach Buzz Williams said. "Some of the smart people are hinting that it does matter."

Sometimes it comes down to where to spread those extra minutes.

The starters and key reserves typically get the same minutes every game. The players further down the bench, deeper in the rotation, may not get regular minutes. At times, those players are going to be counted on in key situations, an injury to a key player, foul trouble, playing in the grind of the conference tournament. For a player who may get two or

three minutes a game regularly, playing an extra four or five, even in a blowout, can make a difference.

"I've told our guys up through 10 or 11, you're going to be in the game at important times for us, so I do feel like I'm going to get them a few more minutes than some other guys do," North Carolina coach Roy Williams said. "At the same time, those walk-on guys, I probably give them a few more minutes than other guys do. It's just about development with the guys I'm going to need."

That leaves walk-ons like Fogerty waiting at the end of the bench for what feels like an eternity. His primary role is to run the scout team in practice, show the starters the upcoming opponents' plays, provide encouragement and enthusiasm.

The reward for all that work is a chance to play in a game and their teammates go wild when they do get in, particularly if they score or make a defensive stop.

"If I get in, if I don't, it's not that big of a deal to me," said Fogerty, who scored his first career

basket at Stanford on Jan. 12. "Of course I want to play, but as long as we win, that's all that matters to me."

And their coaches.



WADE PAYNE/AP

Tennessee head coach Rick Barnes, right, said he's seen too many comebacks to empty his bench early.



## COLLEGE BASKETBALL

ON THE  
RISEMurray State's Morant ascends  
to possible NBA Draft lottery pickBy GARY B. GRAVES  
Associated Press

**J**a Morant is finding ways to stay grounded following his ascension to the bright lights of college basketball's national stage.

The high-flying Murray State point guard is off social media to the dismay of 141,000 followers on his verified Twitter account. He is not listening to lofty projections of being a top-three NBA Draft pick if he leaves after this season.

And until Morant's injured right ankle heals, he's being careful with his highlight-reel dunks that turned him into an overnight sensation.

"There's still a little bit of pain in it," said Morant, who turned the ankle in the early minutes against Belmont on Jan. 24. "I'm playing under the rim now, so ..."

Nonetheless, his sophomore season has been over the top.

The 6-foot-3 guard became a sensation with his acrobatic dunks, rivaling those by his former AAU teammate — Duke's Zion Williamson.

All the attention has taken some getting used to.

"Honestly, it surprised me," said Morant, who also leads Murray State with 5.6 rebounds per game. "I didn't think I would be here right now in this position I'm in. I know eventually that it would have played out in the end, but it happened fast."

If the draft projections play out, Morant could be selected right after Williamson. Their AAU team — the South Carolina Hornets — also featured guard Devontae Shuler, who now plays at Mississippi.

Williamson was the man on that AAU squad, though Morant, a year older than Williamson and just 6-0, was still growing. Even so, their AAU coach, Ricky Taylor, said Morant's point guard skills and floor leadership were "unreal" — not to mention his ability to elevate.

"He could get off the ground then, but he's getting to the rim," Taylor said. "Those three more inches have helped him a lot."

The national narrative about Morant almost seems like this is his first year on Murray State's campus.

But he had a solid freshman season, averaging 12.4 points, 6.6 rebounds and 6.4 assists and helped the Racers win the Ohio Valley Conference to reach the NCAA Tournament.

Now, he has taken his game to another level, averaging 23.9 points and leading the nation in assists at 10.4 per game. He wants to become the first player to finish averaging those lofty numbers since assists became an official NCAA statistic in 1985-86.

"I knew Ja was going to be a special player," Murray State coach Matt McMahon said. "Probably didn't know it would happen this quick, but he's an elite talent. Add to that his ability to make everyone around him better and the fact that he's a hard worker who's a winner, that sets up to have this once-in-a-lifetime type player."

Morant could be Murray State's highest NBA Draft selection, and would follow Racers standouts Cameron Payne (first-round, 2015) and Isaiah Canaan (second, 2013) into the NBA.

An improbable journey indeed.

**'I didn't think I would be here right now in this position I'm in. I know eventually that it would have played out in the end, but it happened fast.'**

Ja Morant

Murray State sophomore guard  
on being a potential  
top-three NBA Draft pick

Murray State guard Ja Morant directs the offense during a game against SIU Edwardsville in Murray, Ky., on Saturday.

TIMOTHY D. EASLEY/AP

## COLLEGE BASKETBALL

# UNDERSIZED and UNBETTERED

## Small players are scoring big

BY AARON BEARD  
Associated Press

**C**AMPBELL'S Chris Clemons keeps hitting shots near midcourt logos, dunking in traffic and passing big names on the list of college basketball's best all-time scorers.

The national scoring leader has a fearless game packed into a 5-foot-9 frame, making the senior the headliner of college basketball's crop of big-time undersized scorers — including No. 10 Marquette's Markus Howard and No. 12 Purdue's Carsen Edwards.

They are Mighty Mites in a game that endlessly yearns for bigger, faster and stronger.

"The main thing is confidence," Clemons said in an interview with The Associated Press. "You always want to be confident in knowing you can play with anybody. I think that carries me through mostly anything, defensively and offensively — that I can play just as well as anybody else regardless of size."

That's certainly true of Clemons and several others nationally:

- Clemons averages a national-best 29.8 points, up from around 25 in each of the previous two seasons, and is ninth in Division I history with 2,978 points;

- Howard, a 5-11 junior, is fourth at 25.6 points;

- Edwards, a junior and preseason AP All-American listed at 6-foot on the NCAA leaderboard but 6-1 by the school, is seventh at 24.6 points;

- There are four other 20-point scorers standing 6 feet or shorter: Hampton junior Jermaine Marrow (6-0, 24.7 points), Texas San Antonio sophomore Jhivvan Jackson (6-0, 22.7), VMI sophomore Bubba Parham (5-11, 20.5) and Northern Illinois junior Eugene German (6-0, 20.5);

- And the season's only two 50-point games came from small scorers: Howard with 53 points against Creighton in January and Furman 5-11 junior Jordan Lyons with 54 against North Greenville in November, though that was an outlier amid Lyons' 16.3-point average.

"If you've grown up with the ball in your hands your whole life — you've had the ball, you've made decisions, you've had to score, you've had to figure out ways — then you're going to find a way," said Kevin McGeehan, Clemons' coach at Campbell.

Howard entered the week shooting 43.7 percent on three-pointers and hit 10 in his 53-point outing. But he gets to the line, too,

where he attempts seven shots per game and shoots 91.6 percent. That alone can turn a good game into a great one, like when he hit 19 of 21 free throws against Kansas State in one of two 45-point showings this season.

"My whole life, I've played above my age," said Howard, who had 38 points in Saturday's win against reigning national champion Villanova. "I always played three and four years older than what I was. I played against guys that were older than me, stronger than me, taller than me. ... So when I got into college, it was something I wasn't really not used to seeing."

Amid that college success, it's unclear how their games might translate in the NBA.

Jay Williams, a former AP national college player of the year at Duke and NBA player, said they will need to find the right fit — maybe a roster seeking scoring or playmaking off the bench — while overcoming defensive concerns.

"You have a lot of guards who are just taller, stronger, athletic and who have post games," said Williams, now an ESPN analyst. "I think that's always the problem when you have smaller guys that come in. ... There's the disadvantage because a team will run the same scheme relentlessly until you stop it."

With a strong 180-pound frame and a quick release, Clemons comes around screens and elevates for three-pointers even with a defender on his hip. He's always ready for the big shot, including when he raced upcourt to bury a 30-footer at the horn to finish with 39 points and win at Big South Conference-leading Radford.

He's also got hops. Just watch his move against Presbyterian as an example, when he came around a perimeter screen past two defenders and took off from the edge of the paint to throw down a heavy dunk.

"When it's time to put on a show, I'm going to put on a show," Clemons said afterward. "I love to give the fans what they came to see."

Clemons, whose favorite player is former Georgetown and NBA star Allen Iverson, had a season-high 45 points against those Hoyas in a December loss and earned high praise from Hoyas coach Patrick Ewing.

"He shoots the three like Steph (Curry) all the way out past the NBA three-point line," the long-time NBA great said. "He gets to the hole and he knocks down free throws. He's a great player."



JASON E. MICZEK, ABOVE, AND DARREN HAUCK, RIGHT/AP

**Above:** At 5-foot-9, Campbell's Chris Clemons is the national scoring leader at 29.8 points per game. **Below:** Marquette's Markus Howard, right, is 5-11, yet scored 53 points against Creighton in January.

Clemons' only other offers out of high school in Raleigh came from Gardner-Webb and UNC Greensboro. Yet he's scored more points than Duke's J.J. Redick, Indiana State's Larry Bird, North Carolina's Tyler Hansbrough and Houston's Elvin Hayes in his climb up the NCAA list.

With 48 points on Wednesday, he passed Kansas' Danny Manning (2,951) and Cincinnati's Oscar Robertson (2,973). He's closing in on becoming the nation's player to score 3,000 career points.

And he's on pace to become the best scorer shorter than 6-0. That mark is held by Saint Peter's Keydren Clark, who at 5-9 scored 3,058 points (25.9 career average) from 2002-06 before an overseas pro career.

"I feel like I've put in the work to be successful before and now it's just starting to show, people are taking notice of it," Clemons said. "That's really big for any player: just knowing what you need. You've got to work on what you need and perfect that, and you'll be successful."



## SPORTS



**Racers' rising star**  
Murray State's Morant has taken game to another level » **Page 62**



NBA

# Basketball's new favorite shot isn't for everyone

By BRIAN MAHONEY  
*Associated Press*

**J**ames Harden turned to it to become the NBA's most unstoppable scorer. Luka Dončić has ridden it to stardom on both sides of the Atlantic.

The step-back three-pointer is the perfect weapon for the modern NBA, practically a necessity in a game where the ability to find space to shoot from behind the arc is more valued than ever before.

"Things have changed and the game is so spread out," Dallas coach Rick Carlisle said. "All over the NBA and all over the world really, everybody's stretching the range out a few feet more. The three-point line is being covered much better than it has in the past so guys are moving back, and guys that can create space to shoot threes unassisted have a special skill. It's going to be a necessary skill more as the game continues to evolve."

But before guys who belong in the paint start hoisting them up from the perimeter, or taking balls off the rack

SEE SHOT ON PAGE 60

Houston Rockets guard James Harden

MARK J. TERRILL/AP

# BACK STEP

7-time champ Johnson out to silence critics » **Page 59**

